Madrasat Ahlul'Bait Islamic School

Upper Grade
Akhlaq and Aqaid

Shia-Muslim Association of Bay Area

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Lessons in Islamic Ethics & Beliefs

Upper Grade Classes

(Ages 13-18)

According to the
Ahlul'Bait School of Thought

Madrasat Ahlul'Bait Islamic School
Shia-Muslim Association of Bay Area

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In the Name of Allah the Most Gracious Most Merciful

Foreword

The material presented in this document is a result of an effort made by the personnel of the school of Ahlul'Bait of the Shia-Muslim Association of Bay Area Islamic Center at San Jose, California in cooperation with several schools of Ahlul'Bait at London-Stanmore, London-Hujjat, Vancouver, Minnesota and Toronto.

We, at San Jose, looked at material from London-Stanmore, London-Hujjat, Vancouver, Minnesota, Toronto and Irvine's Islamic institutions, as well as that available at various web-sites to compile age appropriate textbooks for use by our students. We thank the institutions that were kind enough to provide us with the electronic files of their curriculum. We used some of what they had and added to it what we felt was appropriate. We included more worksheets and pictures where deemed necessary. We also added some new topics that, we felt are important to the students.

We had two important goals in mind while working on this document. First, introduce the students to the important Islamic concepts and beliefs that are crucial for him/her to know. Second, expose the students to as many Quranic verses and sayings from Prophet Muhammad (p) and his Ahlul'Bait (a) as possible.

We thank Hujjatul Islam Maulana Nabi Raza Abidi for his spiritual guidance. We hope future efforts will continue taking place until reaching our goal of having a strong, rich and unified curriculum for the schools of Ahlul'Bait for all ages.

Syllabus Committee
Madrasat Ahlul'Bait

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SECTION I: Islamic Ethics (Akhlaq)

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Akhlaq

1.1 Why is the Moral Character of a Muslim Important?

It is said that a Muslim is the keyhole through which others view Allah. As Muslims, we have to work on our moral character, so that, we provide the best reflection of Allah's attributes to others. People of other religions and creeds learn what Islam is all about by watching the behavior of Muslims.

The Prophet (S) always told the people:

> ***"****I have only been sent to perfect your Akhlaq (moral character)"*

The Qur'an tells the Prophet (S):

> ***"If you had been stern and fierce of heart, they would have dispersed from around you" (Holy Qur'an; 3:159)***

The Prophet (S) was sitting with his companions when there was a discussion as to who the Prophet (S) loved most. The Prophet (S) replied:

> *"On the day of Qiyama, the one closest to me will be the one with the best of akhlaq and the one who is the most humble."*

In appreciation of the character of the Prophet (S) himself, the Holy Qur'an testifies:

> ***"(O Our Prophet,) Verily for you there is a great unending reward. And most certainly you have outstanding Akhlaq." (Holy Qur'an; 68:3,4)***

A famous saying from Imam Hassan (AS)

> *"The best of the best is good morals"*

1.2 Islamic Code of Ethics in the Society

Islamic social codes are the ideals by which Muslims should try to live within a community. Muslims have responsibilities to other people and to surroundings. By respecting the rights of others and protecting the environment, Muslims make it fair for everyone in society and for future generations.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

> *"A Muslim is one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are safe."*

It is necessary for Muslims to acquire three things:

1. Faith (Eeman) and Piety (Taqwa)
2. Knowledge
3. The best Akhlaq

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1.3 What is the Best of Akhlaq (Husnal Khulq)?

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS) was once asked:

> "O son of the Prophet! What is husnul khulq (excellent character)?"

Imam replied:

> *"When all three of the following characteristics are found in a person:*
> *1. To lower your wings (to become accessible)*
> *2. To make your speech the best with others*
> *3. In society, meet others smiling*

1.4 Conclusion:

We have to carefully learn the best way to deal with others according to Islamic tradition and values. We also need to study about the virtues that we as Muslims should acquire and the vices that we should avoid in order to live in peace with others.

1.5 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Hujjat Saturday Workshop, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

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Chapter 2: A-Nafs

In order to develop our akhlaq, we begin by looking inside ourselves at our Nafs. In general, there are three main facets of the nafs (the inner self):

2.1 A-nafs-al-ammara (the Evil Nafs):

This is the Nafs in its worst form, which leads the person toward evil behavior. Whenever there is an opportunity that provides a benefit or pleasure, but might involve some wrong doings; the person's A-Nafs-Al-Ammara urges him/her to just follow that opportunity and not worry about Halaal and Haraam.

If the person's A-Nafs Al-Ammara is the dominant Nafs, he would not pay any attention to the rules and limits set by Allah (S). The word Haraam would not mean anything to him. He would just want to do whatever benefits him without regards to the amount of wrong doing he would do, the amount of suffering he would inflict on others or the amount of corruption he would cause in the community.

With this nafs, the person can reach, with his moral behavior, levels that make him lower than animals.

2.2 A-nafs-a-lawaama (the Blaming Nafs):

This is the good Nafs that is called the blaming and nagging Nafs. After the person does something wrong, his A-NAFS-A-LAWAAMA (conscience) starts blaming and nagging him, telling him that what he did was not right and that he should repent and abstain from doing it again.

This is the stage where most of us believers are, where both A-NAFS-Al-AMMARA and A-NAFS-A-LAWAAMA exist within us and are continuously fighting one another. The stronger this A-NAFS-A-LAWAAMA is in us the better off we are, and the better chance we have to defeat our A-NAFS-AL-AMMARA.

That's why we should keep our A-NAFS-A-LAWAAMA strong and active in watching over our behavior. We should pay attention to its blaming and nagging and always try to correct our behavior to the better.

Finally, if A-NAFS-A-LAWAAMA becomes dominant and wins over A-NAFS-AL-AMMARA, then, the person starts obtaining the third and best type of Nafs, A-NAFS-AL-MUTMAINNA.

2.3 A- nafs-al-mutmainna (the Tranquil Nafs):

Attaining this Nafs is the goal of every good believer. The person who possesses this Nafs is privileged with the acceptance and contentment of Allah. This person is pleased with what Allah provided for her/him and Allah is pleased with her/his behavior.

Possessing this Nafs requires lots of work on our moral character. It starts with watching all of our actions to see if there is any wrong doing in them. After a while, with the help of Allah (S), we become extremely aware of our behavior and we don't knowingly commit any sin or mischief.

It is this nafs which was called on the day of Ashura, when Imam Hussein (AS) put down his sword and heard the voice saying:

> ***"Oh soul that is content! Come back to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing to Him." (Holy Qur'an; 89:27)***

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2.4 Sayings about the nafs:

Imam Ali (AS) said:

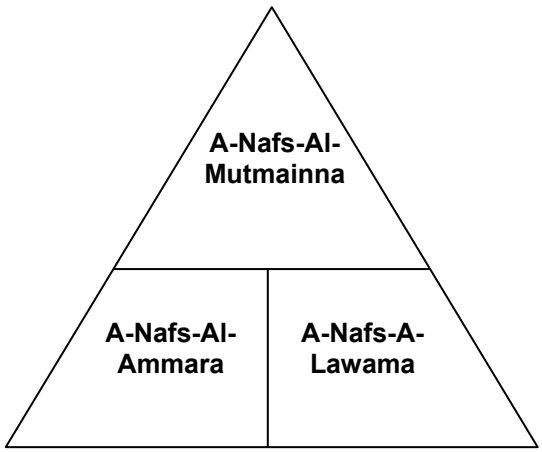
> *"The nafs is like a wild horse and you are riding on it. If you remove your attention for one second, it will throw you off."*

> *“A sign of a believer: his Nafs is tired of him and people are safe and relaxed with him”*

> *" Restraining the self from its appetite is the greatest holy war."*

2.5 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: ***The Shia Ithna’asheri Madressa*****, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**



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Chapter 3: Levels of Eeman

According to one Hadith from Imam Zein Al'abedeen (AS), there are four major levels of **Eeman** (faith). The Muslim becomes a better believer, and a more pious and more knowledgable person as he/she elevates through these levels of Eeman.

3.1 1st Level: "Zuhd": Abstinence from Worldly Indulgence

We should know that every mischief which people commit can be traced back to the love and attachment to this world.

> *"The love of the Dunia is the head of every mischief"*

Imam Sadiq (AS) said:

> *"If the son of Adam has two valleys with gold and silver flowing through them, he will seek a third"*

He also said:

> *"He whose heart is attached to Dunia, his heart is attached to three things: endless worries, unattainable wishes and futile hope"*

For a person succeeding in this level, he/she:

- Is less attached to the (Dunia) and what it offers
- Worldly matters (Dunia) become insignificant in his/her eyes
- Takes enough to satisfy his/her needs but does not go blindly after more and more
- Does not heedlessly indulge in the pleasures of Dunia
- Does not easily get distracted, by every opportunity that comes by
- Keeps focused on why he/she was created by Allah (S) in the first place

We have to deal with this Dunia very carefully because it has a lot to offer us. It will entice us, then it will deceive us, then we get consumed and maybe wasted by it. So, deal with this Dunia as if it is a short and temporary stop.

A way to test if we are succeeding in this level is by seeing if our behavior conforms with this Hadith:

> *"The believer does not become too thrilled when he gains something in this world and does not become sad when he loses something in it."*

3.2 2nd Level: "Wara'" Piety and Abstinence from Sinning

Once the believer has good control over his desires and behavior by practicing "Zuhd", he/she starts reaching the 2nd level where:

- He/she refrains from sinning

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- Worldly matters don't mean much to this believer, especially if it involves any disobedience to Allah (S).
- He/She is cautious and has a clearer vision about potential situations that might lead to committing any sins or wrong doings.

If, for example, the believer wants to make a business deal that might badly affect some poor people. He would abstain because money and business don't mean much to him if it is going to lead him to hurt others and offend Allah (S).

If a bunch of young guys decided to go on a trip, the good believer right away starts thinking ahead about the details of the trip and the consequences. He thinks: We are going to be in a suspicious place, so there is a possibility for mischief, and I might also miss my prayers. So, my decision is: I am not going on that trip.

If a bunch of girls are chatting and laughing but also doing some backbiting, a good believer would abstain from joining them even if she might miss some fun.

3.3 3rd Level: "Yaqeen" Certainty

After passing the 2nd level, the believer:

- Develops a sense of seeing in a clear way the true reality of the creation
- No longer has the veils that exist in front of the eyes of ordinary people and in their hearts
- Easily understands the events that occur around him/her and give a good judgment
- Relies on Allah in every situation
- Anything he experiences, he sees Allah (S) with it. Imam Ali (AS) said:

> *" I haven't seen anything without seeing Allah in it and with it…"*

Imam Ali (AS) told us about the state of certainty that He reached when He said:

> *"Even if the veil (of the unseen realm) was dropped, my certainty wouldn't have increased."*

Some people told our Prophet (S) that Prophet Jesus (AS) used to walk on the face of water. The Prophet replied ***"yes, and if his yaqeen was stronger he would have walked in thin air."***

3.4 4th Level: "Rida, Tasleem & Tafweed", Acceptance and Submission.

This is the highest level of "Eeman". Believers at this level:

- Live with a tranquil soul
- Are pleased with what Allah (S) had prescribed and provided for them and Allah (S) is pleased with their actions
- Submit totally to Allah's will and gladly accept Allah's ordinance and prescription in every matter
- Commission Allah (S) to choose for them what He sees best

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It is easy for someone to think that he/she is at that level, only to fail the first simple test that Allah (S) puts in front of him.

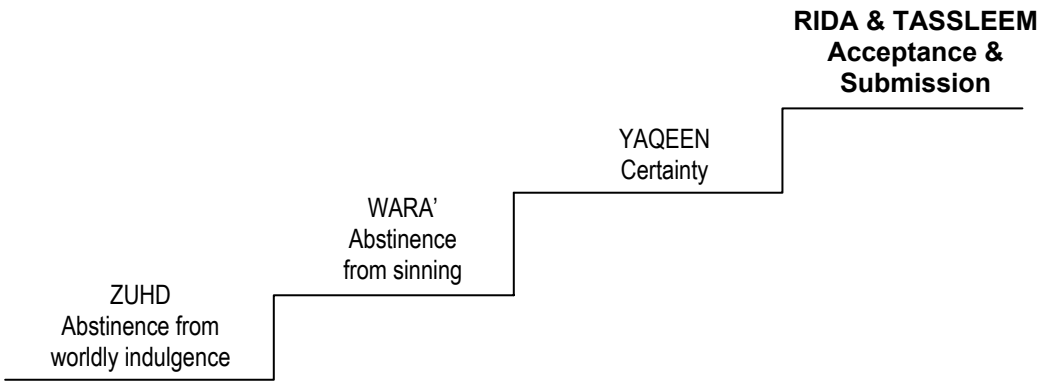
The questions that one would ask him/herself to test if oneself is at that level:

- Am I, at every moment of my life, pleased with what Allah prescribed for me and put me through? (That's in regards to my wealth, my looks, my social status, the hardships I face, …etc.)
- Do I submit to Allah's will without any conditions or complaints?
- Do I gladly and joyfully accept whatever hardships and tests I face as a chance to get closer to Allah (S)?

Apparently, not many people can answer with a "Yes" and there is a lot to be done before one would reach this high level of Eeman.

Finally, everyone should be careful, our Prophet (S) said:

> *"Deeds without faith are not accepted and faith without deeds is not accepted"*



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Chapter 4: The Importance of DU'A

Du'a is a form of prayer, a supplication, with which we establish a direct line of communication with Allah (S). In doing du'a, we are putting our trust in Allah and declaring that relying on Allah is an important focal point in our lives.

"Oh People, you are the needy to Allah" (Holy Qur'an; 35:15)

4.1 The Power of Du'a:

Allah (S) created us with lots of weaknesses, vulnerabilities and needs. At the same time, Allah (S) offered the remedies and provided the means to get these remedies. One of the means is making Du'a.

4.2 Du'a Reverses Destiny:

One of the potentials of Du'a is that the person can change his/her fate by doing it.

"Du'a reverses destiny"

4.3 Du'a is Wajib:

Allah (S), in the Qur'an, warned the people who don't seek His help:

"Ask Me; Those who are too proud to ask Me will enter hell" (Holy Qur'an; 40:60)

What does it mean when we refuse to do du'a and refuse to seek Allah's help to satisfy our needs?
It means that we are behaving arrogantly, and that we think we can manage on our own and don't need Allah's help.

4.4 A Promise from Allah (S):

Allah (S) calls on us to go to Him first with our problems and needs. Allah (S) wants us to plea our case to Him directly and to have a strong faith that He will answer our du'a no matter how tough the situation is.

"Ask me, verily I am close, I answer the call of the caller if he calls me"
(Holy Qur'an 2:186)

In Du'a Kumail, we are commanded to seek Allah's help and we are promised that Allah (S) will answer us.

"For You have decreed Your worship for your creatures, You commanded them to pray to You and You have assured them that they would be answered"

4.5 Misconceptions about Du'a:

There are some misconceptions about du'a, especially among young people. A frequently repeated idea is that du'a is only for mullahs, or for old people who have nothing better to do than hoping to get some rewards

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from Allah before they pass away. Some people also think that du'a is optional for us, but Allah (S) reminded us:

> ***"My Lord would pay no attention to you if it was not for your du'a" (Holy Qur'an; 25:77)***

Another misconception about du'a is the notion that I only need to make du'a when I am in trouble. I don't need to do it when things are going fine. The reply to this notion is that, even if presently things look rosy and fine, and it appears as if we have it all, things could, all of a sudden, turn bad. So, we should not wait till we are in trouble or in need for something to remember to make du'a.

In relationship, this is a short story about a little boy whose life was in serious danger and all the people around him were helplessly looking on and panicking, not knowing what to do. A simple old man happened to be passing. He uttered a few words of du'a that resulted in a miracle which saved the boy's life. When the man was asked about his secret, he simply answered: "I remember Him (Allah (S)) in the good times, He surely remembers me in the tough times".

> ***"Then you do remember Me; I will remember you" (Holy Qur'an 2:152)***

4.6 Make it a Habit

We should make a habit to communicate with Allah every single day through du'a, thanking him for what we have, asking his protection against wrong doing, asking his help in order to make successful decisions in our life.

4.7 When is the Best Time for Du'a?

The best time for du'a is after finishing a daily prayer. After we perform our prayer with good heed and concentration, it is very favorable that Allah accepts our du'a. We should read the prescribed du'as and we can also casually ask Allah (S) with our own words to satisfy any of our needs.

4.8 What Can We Ask for?

Should we ask Allah for help with any problem, no matter how small or silly it is? The answer is a big **yes**, Allah would like us to do du'a and ask his help for any problem no matter how small it is. There is a Hadith that says:

> *"Make a du'a even if only a part of your shoe breaks."*

Should we ask for lots and lots; anything that comes to our mind or we wish for?
We could, but it is not recommended. The purpose of our existence is not to have everything we wish for, but rather to live a humble and decent life with plenty of good deeds preparing for the Hereafter.

4.9 Is it Guaranteed That Allah (s) Will Answer Our Du'a?

Yes, but only if we are not insisting on committing sins, and if answering our du'a is good for us. Allah (S) sometimes, for our own good, does not grant us what we ask for, because He knows best what is good for us and He also knows the consequences that follow which might get us in trouble. So, we should never feel ignored by Allah or disappointed that our du'a was not answered.

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Our approach in du'a should be like we read in one of Imam Zainul 'Abedeen (AS) du'as:

> *"(O Allah) And for every need of mine, if in satisfying it there is your acceptance and some benefit for me, please satisfy it for me"*

4.10 How Do We Make Du'a?

We can use our own words and ask Allah (S) in anyway we wish. But since we are communicating with Allah (S) we should have respect and prepare the neatest presentation possible. And like when we are sick we go to the doctor, who is an expert, to get the cure. For Du'a, we go to our Prophet and Imams, who are deeply rooted in knowledge, to tell us what to say. They reached a very high level of piety that led them to know better about the keys to the acceptance and content of Allah. They very well know our needs and weaknesses. And, they are the most eloquent.

Our Prophet and Imams perfected some beautiful ways to approach Allah in the du'a. We notice that they start the du'a with praising and glorifying Allah (S), mentioning his majestic powers and attributes and then thanking him for the ample bounties he bestowed on us. Then, they mention about our weaknesses and sins, in an apologetic and remorseful way and that we sinned without having any excuse. Then, they use arguments from the Qur'an that Allah (S) is our only shelter and refuge and He promised to help whosoever seek his forgiveness. Finally, they seek Allah's forgiveness, mercy and satisfaction to our needs.

Imam Zainul 'Abedeen (AS) has given us a collection of du'as known A-Sahifa A-Sajadia. This collection contains many du'as for all occasions which is one of the treasures left behind by the Ahlul bayt (AS). He has also given us short du'as to be recited on each day of the week and after each of the daily prayers.

4.11 Starting and Ending a Du'a:

When making a du'a it is better to start and end with a Salawat, "Allahma Sally 'Ala Muhammad W'Aaly Muhammad" and recite the du'a in between. This way, if Allah (S) accepts the two Salawats, with His generosity, He will accept everything in between.

4.12 Should we Seek Direct Help From Only Allah and Never Rely on People?

The answer is: not exactly. Allah (S) does not want us to humiliate ourselves by asking unworthy people. But also Allah in many cases answers our du'a at the hands of other people, especially good believers. This way Allah strengthens the bond between good believers and keeps the cooperation amongst them. So, after doing du'a, it is good to go to your brother or sister seeking a solution to your problem, but know that Allah has arranged for this help.

4.13 How does Allah Like Us to Ask Him?

With hope, compassion and persistence in such a way that shows that Allah (S) is the only resort we have.

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4.14 Don't Forget to be Thankful

Often, when people are in trouble, they turn to Allah (S) in a strong and passionate way, making du'a with diligence and persistence. When the du'a is accepted by Allah (S) and the problem goes away, these people tend to quickly forget that it is Allah who accepted their du'a and brought them relief. Allah (S) reminds us about that:

> ***"When a man get touched by a problem, he cries unto his Lord turning unto Him. Then when He (Allah) grants him a bounty from Him, he forgets that he cried unto Him before" (Holy Qur'an; 39:8)***

> ***"After we alleviated his misfortune, he passed by as if he did not make du'a to Us for his misfortune" (Holy Qur'an; 10:12)***

So, let's remember to be appreciative and thankful to Allah when our du'a is answered and our problems are resolved.

4.15 Effects of Du'a:

When we do Du'a, we notice certain feelings inside of us:

- The feeling that Allah is the center of our thoughts
- The feeling of strength, that, no matter how big the problem is, we are seeking help from the Almighty and the most Capable
- The feeling of confidence, that Allah wouldn't humiliate nor ignore us
- The feeling of hope that takes the place of any despair in our hearts

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Chapter 5: Manners of Talking

Imam Ali (AS) said:

> ***"A person is hidden under his tongue"***

This means that one is valued through one's conversation.

The following were guidelines given by Imam Hussein (AS) to Ibn Abbas about good and useful conversation.

> ***"Do not begin a conversation without first greeting the person you are talking to."***

- Salaam should come before kalam (conversation).

> ***"Keep away from a conversation which is without an aim or object, for it lowers your position."***

- You waste your energy
- You say things you later regret
- People would think less of you

> ***"...Wait to speak at the right opportunity; many speak the truth but not at the right moment and therefore have to face disrespect."***

> ***"Do not argue with a patient person for he will win over you with the power of his patience."***

- Even though the person is wrong, he can use his patience to win the argument
- With patience, he/she will tire you and frustrate you

> ***"Do not argue with foolish and ignorant people as they will hurt you with their nonsense."***

- They frustrate you and you will get nowhere with them

> ***"You may only backbite a person with which you would like him to speak of you."***

- Refrain from talks that involve any backbiting

Imam Ali (A.S.) has said:

> ***"Your speech is under your firm control as long as you do not speak, but if you speak you come under its control; so guard your tongue as you guard your gold and silver, for many a word is a blessing but leads to displeasure"***

It is said that "The spoon always seems twice as large when you have to take a dose of your own medicine."

Words which appear to be just tiny molehills of idleness and frivolity here in this world will loom as mountains of error when we are faced with them on the day of Qiyama.

It has been estimated that most people speak enough in one week to fill a large 500 page book. In the average lifetime this would amount to 3000 volumes or 1,500,000 pages. It is a frightening thought that by these words we shall be either 'blessed' or 'condemned'.

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Imam Sadiq (AS) said that the most valuable thing Allah (S) has given us is the tongue. None of His Messengers (Prophets) were given wealth or position through which to convey His message but were given eloquence of the tongue.

It is said that one must speak little with people (only that which is necessary) and speak much with Allah; perhaps then one's heart will recognize Him.

Allah made everything with two doors, but he made four for the tongue - the two lips and the two sets of teeth.

There is an ancient Greek fable about a monster known as Proteus who had the power of assuming many shapes and appearances. He could become a tree or a pebble, a lion or a dove, a serpent or a lamb. He seemed to have very little difficulty in passing from one form into another. The fabled creature reminds one of the human tongue. It can bless or curse, express praise or whisper slander, it can spread a word of encouragement or spread vindictive hatred.

5.1 Credits & References:

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Chapter 6: Picking Friends

Choosing the right friend is very important in a person's life, because a friend has a great effect on one's thoughts and behavior.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

> ***"Everyone will behave according to the beliefs and principles of his friend."***

6.1 Qualities One Should Look for In a Friend

6.1.1 Knowledge and Patience:

Imam Ali (AS) has said:

> ***"The best of companions (friends) are those who have knowledge and patience"***

Choose friends who have knowledge and are interested in learning and talking about important events, rather than wasting time gossiping or talking about worthless things. Choose also the friends that are patient with you and have tolerance when they have some advantage over you.

6.1.2 Reliability:

Our Ma'sumeen have told us that:

> ***"A friend who is reliable is an adornment at the times of happiness and a security in times of difficulty".***

This means during the happy days it is a pleasure to be in his/her company, and when one is in difficulty then one knows that there is always someone there to fall back on.

6.1.3 Good Akhlaq:

Because the akhlaq of a friend affects and rubs off on us, it is important to have and be friends with those having good akhlaq. There is a Spanish saying which says:
"If you go to the wolves, it is howling which you will learn from them."

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS) said:

"Avoid friendship with three types of people:

1. ***A traitor because on one day he will deceive others in order to benefit you and on another day he will deceive you to benefit others..***
2. ***A tyrant because if he oppresses others for your sake, one day he will oppress you...***
3. ***A rumor monger (one who gossips) because if he gossips about others in front of you then one day he will gossip about you before others."***

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Imam Sadiq (AS) also said:

"A friend is one who fulfils the conditions below:

- ***What he/she feels toward you and what he/she says about you must be the same***
- ***He/she should consider your good things as his/her good things and your bad things as his/her bad things. Similarly he/she should consider your honor as his/her honor and your disgrace to be his/her disgrace***
- ***If his/her financial position changes for the better or he/she acquires a high position his/her attitude toward you should not change***
- ***He/she should not fail to assist you to the maximum extent of his/her capability***
- ***He/she should not abandon you and leave you alone when you are in trouble"***

Imam Hassan Askari (AS) said:

> ***"The best of your friends are those who forget your inadequacies but never forget your kindness"***

We also have duties toward our friends, the least of which is appreciating their kindness.

Imam Ali (AS) said:

> ***"One who does not appreciate a favor or kindness is no more than an animal"***

And finally, Imam Ali (AS) said:

> ***"If after investigation a person establishes friendship, it will be a firm and stable friendship"***

What does this saying mean?:

"A Muslim friend is a mirror for his Muslim friend"

6.2 Credits & References:

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Chapter 7: The Duties of Muslims towards Others

7.1 Duties towards Parents:

Parents are the means of the creation of a child and the imparters of his initial education and training; therefore, the holy religion of Islam has placed a great deal of emphasis on children's obeying to them and on their respect to an extent that the Almighty Allah has commanded the people to be kind and generous to their parents right after mentioning Tawheed (the Oneness of Allah) and states:

> ***"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him and has commanded goodness to your parents..." (Holy Qur'an; 17:23)***

In ahadith enumerating mortal sins, misconduct toward parents ranks second to shirk (polytheism). Allah the Almighty states:

> ***"...If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) "uffh" nor chide them, and speak to them generous words. And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion, and say: 'O my Lord! have compassion on them, similar to what they had on me when they brought me up (when I was) little' " (Holy Qur'an; 17:23-24)***

Obedience to the parents is wajib except if they order their children to give up one of the wajib deeds of religion or perform a religiously haraam act. It has been proven by experience that those who tease their parents do not remain happy and prosperous in their lives and consequently they will not attain salvation.

7.2 Duties towards Elders:

It is required to respect the elders, as the Holy Prophet (S) states*:*

> *"The glorification and respect for the elders is the glorification and respect for Allah."*

Respect to elders is a very important concept. Elders are not just old people, but people who have done their share for the community. They have worked hard and it is thanks to them that we have all the things around us today! Would it be fair that when they are too old to work, that we should forget them and send them away to old people's homes? We are young now, but how would you feel if after you have lived and given your life in service to the community, your own youngsters were to ignore you and forget you?

Allah tells us that the best ornaments of a community are its elderly people. They are the cause of so many blessings that if the younger people knew how much Allah loves the elderly, they would never leave them alone for even one moment.

7.3 Duties towards Relatives:

The paternal and maternal relatives are the natural means for the formation of society. For the sake of this unity and natural relationship, Islam orders its followers to observe the bonds of kinship with kindness. Strong recommendations have been made in the Qur'an and the ahadith of religious leaders in this respect. Allah (S) states:

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"...And be careful of (your duty to) Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship; surely Allah ever watches over you." (Holy Qur'an; 4:1)

The Holy Prophet (SA) states:

"I enjoin my Ummah (people) to observe the kinship bonds with kindness. Even if the relatives are separated from one another by a year-long distance, they should not disconnect the kinship bonds of their relationship."

7.4 Duties towards Neighbors:

Since neighbors very often come in contact with one another due to the proximity of their residences and naturally - as they constitute a larger family, the good behavior and the misbehavior of one of them will have a big effect on the others.

Relationships between neighbors should be strong and healthy because they share a common fate when undesirable events occur, such as fires, accidents, natural disasters etc… In these instances, cooperation between neighbors becomes so important that their survival depends on it.

The Holy Prophet (S) stated:

"Jibril recommended to me about the neighbors to such an extent that I thought the Almighty Allah would appoint one's neighbor as one of his heirs" He also stated: "whoever believes in Allah and in Ma'ad, never does injustice to his neighbor, lends him money if he asks for it, and shares his grief and happiness. One should not annoy his neighbor even if he is an unbeliever"

He also states:

"He, who hurts his neighbor, will not smell the fragrance of Paradise and he, who disregards the rights of his neighbor, is not my follower. Whoever has had enough to eat and does not help his neighbor after knowing that he is hungry, is not a Muslim"

7.5 Duties towards the Sick:

The sick are usually broken-hearted and dejected persons who most of all stand in need of affability, kindness and mental reinforcement, because they consider themselves deprived and disabled and at times lose hope completely. It is evident that in such circumstances visits by friends and brethren-in-faith are a source of great consolation for them and provide them with comfort and mental satisfaction.

The Holy Prophet of Islam says:

"Every Muslim who visits a sick person is absorbed in Allah's blessings and during the time he is seated by him, he sits in the middle of Divine mercy. If he visits the sick man in the morning seventy thousand angels pray for him till evening and if he visits him in the evening seventy thousand angels pray for him till morning."

Islam orders that when you visit the sick you should enquire about their health and pray for them, because it is possible that by this means their hearts may be consoled.

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The Holy Prophet (S) says:

> *"Visit the sick and escort the funerals of the dead so that you may be reminded of the next world. Pray for the sick person and say: "O Allah! Cure him with your cure and treat him with your medicine and keep him safe from your calamity."*
>
> *When you visit a sick person take a present for him/her, albeit very small.*

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

> *"Whoever is willing to feed a sick person shall be provided by Allah with the fruit of Paradise."*

Once when some friends of Imam al Sadiq (AS) were going to visit a sick person he met them on the way and asked them to stop. When they stopped he asked them: *"Are you carrying with you and apple or quince or citron or some perfume or a piece of aloes-wood?"* They replied in the negative.

Thereupon the Holy Imam (AS) said: *"Don't you know that such things ensure peace of mind of a sick person?"*

7.6 Duties towards the Needy and the Poor:

There is no doubt that the establishment of a society is to fulfill the needs of the individuals. The most important duty of the members of any society is to help the helpless and the weak and to eliminate in some way the needs of those who are unable to eliminate these by themselves.

It has been thoroughly clarified nowadays that the carelessness of the rich toward the difficulties of the poor is the greatest danger that can destroy a society and that the rich will be the first victim of this danger.

Taking this danger into consideration, fourteen centuries ago, Islam ordered the rich to distribute a portion of their wealth among the poor and the helpless annually. If the said amount is sufficient to eliminate the needs of the poor, it is recommended that the rich donate as much as they can for the cause of Allah so as to improve the living conditions of the poor.

The Almighty Allah states:

> ***"By no means shall you attain righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love..." (Holy Qur'an; 3:92)***

The ahadith on the subject of serving humanity are innumerable. The Holy Prophet (SA) stated:

> *"The best of men is one who is more beneficial for the people."*
>
> *"In Ma'ad, a person who has taken greater steps toward charitable acts for the servants of Allah will be placed in a higher status before the Almighty Allah."*

7.7 Duties towards Society:

Many things can be said regarding this topic. However, we will limit it to two Hadith from the Holy Prophet (S):

> *"Whoever does not care about the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim."*

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As we know, human beings work with joint effort. They take advantage of each others' endeavors to satisfy the needs of their life. The society established by these individuals is similar to a "great man" and each individual is like an organ of this great man's body.

The duty of the members of a society is exactly like the duty of the organs of a body, i.e., man must look for his interests within the framework of the interests of the society. He must consider what benefits the society would derive from his efforts so that by his efforts all are benefited and he also gets benefited. He must defend the rights of others so that his own rights would not be violated.

> *"A Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue Muslims are safe."*

Muslims should be a peaceful element in the society where they spread peace and tolerance, not fear and corruption. Others should not fear their words or deeds.

7.8 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: ***The Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa*, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Hujjat Saturday Workshop, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

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Chapter 8: Music and Its Effects

Islam prohibits listening to most types of music and singing. Disco, Rock&Roll, Jazz, heavy metal, Rap, etc… are all Haraam. This may sound too drastic, but we shall discuss some of the reasons for this prohibition.

8.1 What is Halaal?

Some scholars might allow listening to a very limited portion of some types of music like inspirational music that raises the self esteem in a positive way or some classical music that relaxes the nerves. They might also allow listening to some poetry with some soft background music that makes the mind reflect and ponder about creation and existence. Even with these types of music and lyrics, we have to be careful because too much of it would have a negative effect on us. As is the case with food, too much of it would hurt our body. The fact is, we can't live without food, but we can live without music.

8.2 The Effects of Music:

Music has an effect on people's mind, the body and the emotional state. It influences their behavior and judgment and attitude toward important life issues and decisions. When you see the ill atmosphere in concerts, then, you can tell what powerful effect music has on people.

Under the influence of some types of music, such as head bangers and heavy metal, the mind gets possessed. Very often, with loud music, played at discos and parties, the people begin to dance and move in rhythm to the music. This causes them to become in an emotional state where they lose all control over their actions and morals, lose control of their nafs, and lose all sense of shame.

In addition, usually, music, alcohol and drugs are associated with one another. Their combination is lethal and causes people to be unaware of their actions.

One of the effects music has on the youth in the society is the association with bands and singers. Many youngsters growing up in the west identify themselves with a certain band or club. They proudly decorate their bedroom and clothes with posters and pictures of their favorite band. They also go through personality changes in order to emulate these idols.

Consider the effects music has on driving or riding in cars. The minute a young person gets in a car, he/she feels the urge to put on some very loud music and drive too fast. This shows you how potent the influence of music is on youngsters.

8.3 The Singers' Goal:

Singers, and groups, for a purpose, use suggestive lyrics and words that arouse the desires. While performing, they make indecent gestures while having dancers with revealing clothing on stage. They use these kinds of performances for the purpose of attracting large youth audiences in order to make huge profits, not caring about the corruption they leave behind.

8.4 Results of Listening to Music:

Let's list some of the possible outcomes of listening to music or singing. The music or the song:

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- Becomes an escape from reality and the challenges of life (by listening to music and singing, all of my problems would go away!!!).
- Gives us a false sense of satisfaction and security.
- Teaches youngsters defiance and rebelliousness.
- Brings up pride and conceit in our personalities.
- Makes us somewhat careless about our surroundings and the occurring world events.
- Makes us irrational and unreasonable when making important life decisions.
- Compromises our firm control on our behavior.
- Leads to sinning.

8.5 The Qur'an's and the Infallibles' Position Regarding Music:

After briefly explaining the effects of music, let's list some of the verses of Qur'an and some sayings from the Holy Prophet (S) and Imams (AS):

One person told Imam Sadiq (AS) that he has a neighbor who has singing girls and he sometimes can't help but sitting near by to listen to them singing. Imam Sadiq (AS) told him not to do it and recited these verses:

> ***"Verily his hearing, his seeing, and his heart, they will all be questioned"***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 17:36)***
>
> ***"So abstain from the pollution of the idols and abstain from false talk"***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 22:30)***

Imam Sadiq (AS) said:

> *"Pollution of the idols means chess and false talk means music and singing"*
>
> ***"Indeed successful are the believers, those in their prayers are humble and those who keep themselves aloof from Vain (words and deeds)" (Holy Qur'an; 23:1-3)***

Vain (words and actions) ='Laghoo' (in Arabic). Imam Ali (AS) said that

> *"All that void of the remembrance of Allah is Laghoo"*

According to other Imams also 'Laghoo' means: all useless entertainment and wasteful of time, among which music was specifically mentioned.

We must possess a strong will when it comes to listening to Haraam music and singing and try to behave according to this verse:

> ***"And they who do not bear witness to what is false, and when they pass by what is vain, they pass with dignity" (Holy Qur'an; 25:72)***

In a song, the combination of music with unrealistic (non sense) lyrics creates an illusion that plays with the mind of the listener in a drastic way, especially when he/she is emotionally weak. Singers say things that they themselves do not believe or apply in their lives.

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Allah (S) said in the Qur'an that:

> ***"The poets are followed by the wanderers, don't you see that they stray in every valley, and they say what they don't do" (Holy Qur'an; 26:224)***

In a list of major sins which he sent to caliph Mamun, Imam Rida (AS) mentioned the participation in musical gatherings.

Imam Baqir (AS) said:

> *"Music is among the things for which Allah has promised Hell fire"*

8.6 Do an Evaluation!

When we conduct an evaluation if we can listen to a song, we should look at three major things: the music in the song, the lyrics, and the singer(s), and ask ourselves these questions:

- Is the music suggestive or provocative and falls under the Haraam kind?
- Do the lyrics have a meaning or foundation? Or they are just false talk?
- Do the lyrics contradict the teachings of Islam?
- Do the lyrics teach rebelliousness, carelessness, irrationality or apathy?
- Does the singer's orientation, behavior and way of life conform with ours?
- Does the singer believe or apply the words he/she is singing?
- Will listening bring me closer to my Lord?

Almost always the answers to these questions prevent a good believer from listening to music and singing.

Finally, remember that, it is much easier for Satan to deceive people in places where loud music is being played and lead them to commit Haraam acts.

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Chapter 9: Virtues of Eeman

The following topics were covered in detail in the Middle Grades' curriculum. They are repeated here in a summarized fashion in order to refresh the student's memory and as a reminder of their importance in building a good Islamic character.

9.1 Cleanliness

"Cleanliness is the sign of a mu'min and the mu'mineen that will enter Jannna"
Prophet Muhammad (S)

"Cleanliness is half of Eeman (faith)" *Imam Ali (AS)*

1400 years ago, in the deserts of Arabia, where water was at a shortage, the Prophet (S) preached that cleanliness was half of faith.

Until the 16th century of the Christian era, Europe was void of the concept of cleanliness. The Christian priests refused to give the approval of building bath houses. Toilets did not exist and people threw their filth in the streets.

Will Durant writes: "One of the good results of the Crusades was the imitation of the hot bath houses of the Muslims in Europe. The church however, was not happy with them."

Cleanliness of the body, clothes and surroundings is essential for a Muslim as the following ahadith of our Imams (AS) portray.

"Keeping's one's surroundings clean, keeps poverty and miseries away"
"Keep your clothes clean and tahir. Amongst your clothes the best color is white"
"Do not allow dirt and rubbish to remain in your house during the night, as they are the abode of Shaytan"
"Angel Jibrail laid so much stress on the brushing of teeth that I thought that the Almighty Allah was going to make it wajib".
"...if a person keeps a Masjid neat and clean, Allah grants a reward equal to that of setting free a slave".

9.2 Patience (SABR)

It is a great virtue for someone to posses.

"Indeed Allah is with those who have sabr" ***(Holy Qur'an; 2: 153)***

The Prophet (S) said:

"Sabr is of three kinds:
1. *Sabr at the time of hardship*
2. *Sabr in regard to obedience*
3. *Sabr in regard to disobedience"*

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Sabr in regard to hardship means to stop oneself from complaining about the difficulties that we face and the tests that Allah (S) put us through.

Sabr in regard to obedience means to perform the wajibaat, **especially the daily Salaat**, patiently and correctly and to have sincerity and presence of mind. Sometimes it is hard and inconvenient, like when we are sick, but we should endure these times and do our best. Another example is Khums.

Sabr in regard to disobedience is by avoiding sins and wrong doings even if that results in losing some gains in life. For instance, we keep away from suspicious places where wrong doings might be committed.

9.3 Swallowing Anger

“Kathm-ul Gaiz” means to swallow anger and forgive others. It is one of the most commendable acts in Islam.

> ***"...And those who swallow their anger and forgive people; Indeed Allah loves the righteous ones” (Holy Qur’an; 3:134)***

Our Prophet (S) said:

> *"Do you consider the intense strength as being in the lifting of (a heavy) stone whereas in fact it is in overpowering oneself when filled with anger."*

Imam Musa al Kathim (AS) was given the title AL-KATHIM for this reason. He is the ideal example of one who swallowed his anger. He was treated despicably and imprisoned by the oppressors right up to his martyrdom in prison, but he restrained his anger and bore it with patience.

9.4 Controlling the Tongue

Remember that Imam Ali (AS) said: ***"****A person is hidden under his tongue"*

This means that one is valued through one's conversation.

Imam Ali (AS) also said:

> *"Your speech is under your firm control as long as you do not speak, but if you speak you come under its control; so guard your tongue as you guard your gold and silver, for many a word is a blessing but leads to displeasure"*

How many times do a few words that we utter in public, to make an impression or make our friends laugh, cause agony and regret on our part.

Sometimes, we want to say a comment or some words of criticism which might be 100% correct. But it is not the right time for saying it, because it might create a problem. In this situation we should abstain from saying anything and wait for the appropriate time.

9.5 Moderation

> ***“And do not make your hand tied to your neck nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so you become blameworthy, destitute” (Holy Qur’an; 17:29)***

Imam Sadiq (AS) said:

> *“I have a guarantee for he who is moderate in spending that he will never be poor”*

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Prophet Muhammad (S) said:

> *“Three things Allah (S) loves: little talking, little sleeping and little eating. Three things Allah (S) dislikes: lots of talking, lots of sleeping and lots of eating”*

Imam Ali (AS) said:

> *“The best of dealings are the ones done in moderation”*

9.6 Truthfulness

Everyone loves a truthful person. Truthfulness is something that everyone knows is important, but yet it is one of the most difficult virtues to make into a habit.

How many times have we said something that we later don’t go through with. Sometimes, to avoid people or responsibilities, sometimes to get out of trouble, or sometimes just to make ourselves look big, and get attention our speech may not be truthful.

Prophet Muhammad (S) said,

> *"Leave falsehood and make speaking the truth a habit."*

The Qur'an also reminds us to tell the truth:

> ***“And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when you know (what it is)” (Holy Qur’an; 2:42)***

9.7 Sitting With Ahlul Khayr

The **Ahlul Khayr** are the believers that remind you of Allah (S) and the Hereafter, especially the scholars.

The companions of Prophet 'Isa (AS) once asked him:

> *"When you are not there, where shall we go?"*

Prophet 'Isa (AS) replied:

> *"To one whom when you see, you remember Allah; and whose knowledge reminds you of the hereafter".*

9.8 Generosity

Imam Ali (AS) has said:

> *“Generosity is nearness to the Creator and creation, and miserliness is distance from the Creator and creation."*
>
> *"Generosity and giving people are displayed in feeding people, not in giving them wealth. Whoever gives away a thousand while being stingy with a plate of food is not generous."*
> *"Overlook and forgive the weaknesses of generous people, because if they fall down, the hands of Allah lift them up."*

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9.9 Earning a Living

"There are 70 branches of worship, the best of which is earning a living from Halaal sources"
Prophet Muhammad (S)

9.10 Will Power

Will power is the ability (POWER) to control your desires (WILL)!

To have will power means to be able to keep yourself away from bad habits, from simple points such as sleeping late to behavior which is much worse, such as not offering our prayers on time, or even not offering them at all!!

The whole month of Ramadan is an exercise of will power. **The easiest thing in the month of Ramadan is not to eat food**. It is very easy to fast, compared to what else we must accomplish. We must control ourselves from looking, listening to things which are Haraam. We must control our tempers, and our language. At the end of the month, we would have conquered that voice inside us which invites us toward evil: the voice of the evil nafs (nafs ammara).

Once, someone asked the Prophet (S): "Don't you have a voice inside you (a Shaytan) which tells you to do evil?" And he replied, ***"Yes I do! But I keep it locked up."***

When Islam teaches us to offer our prayers on time, it teaches us discipline, which strengthens our will power. The same way a mother will tell the child to go to bed exactly at 7:00 pm, so that by discipline, the child will learn to go to sleep early by himself, Islam teaches us that **only by discipline, will we be able to control our Nafs.**

9.11 Awaiting the Faraj (Relief, Breakthrough)

Most beloved action to Allah (S) is waiting for the relief. This is the best of all deeds.

When life becomes complicated with too many problems, too much oppression, and there is not much the believer can do. Instead of helplessly getting depressed, one should turn to Allah (S), seek His help and wait for the breakthrough.

Pessimism means that we are not putting our trust in Allah (S). Indirectly, we would be accusing Allah (S) of being unjust, and incapable of solving our problem.

Allah (S) does not like the despondent who gives up when faced with hardship.

The biggest Faraj (breakthrough) is the emergence of Imam Mahdi (AS) from His occultation.

9.12 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: ***The Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa*, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Hujjat Saturday Workshop, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

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Chapter 10: Overcoming Vices

Most of the following topics were covered in detail in the Middle Grades' curriculum. They are repeated here in a summarized fashion. The goal is to refresh the student's memory about destructive vices and as a reminder on how to avoid them in order to build a good Islamic character.

10.1 Anger

Almighty Allah (S) had said,

> ***"Oh the son of Adam! Remember Me when in anger so that I remember you when you deserve my wrath and do not destroy you."***

Imam Ali (AS) has said that:

> *"Should any of you be faced with anger, he should sit down if standing, or lie down if sitting."*

Wudhu has a calming and cooling effect on the body. It also makes the person remember Allah, and regains control over oneself.

10.2 Pride (Kibr)

There are various aspects and levels of pride.

1. **Pride toward Allah & His commands -** This is the worst sort of pride. It is when one, arrogantly, challenges Allah's authority or claims to have powers similar to Allah's, e.g. Pharaoh claimed to be god. With regards to pride toward Allah's commands, it is when one does not practice the wajibaat because one feels it does not comply with his/her status.

2. **Pride toward humanity -** It can be divided into the following categories.
   - i) Pride in possessing true faith
   - ii) Pride in having no faith or having false belief
   - iii) Pride in having good qualities
   - iv) Pride in being immoral
   - v) Pride in one's righteous acts and worship
   - vi) Pride in committing sinful and wicked deeds

Pride is the result of thinking one possesses some kind of excellence. When this happens, the person feels that others are inferior. It will start reflecting in his behavior in the community. Even basic actions like walking and talking change. The intensity of pride takes over a person without him/her realizing it. He/she creates an artificial halo of sacredness around him/herself.

Pride enters our hearts very secretly, it tries to hide from us, and takes our thoughts over quietly; that is why Prophet Muhammad (S) has told us:

> *"Pride enters the heart like a black ant crawling over a black rock at night."*

Pride is so dangerous, Prophet Muhammad (S) said:

> *"Never can the person who possesses a speck of pride (kibr) inside his/her heart enter Janna."*

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To remove pride, one of the most effective cures is to remember death as often as possible. Imam Ali (AS) used to announce in the masjid:

> *"Equip yourself and be ready, for your departure has already been announced."*

10.3 Backbiting

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah tells us:

> ***"...And do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the dead flesh of his brother?" (Holy Qur'an; 49:12)***

The wife of the Prophet (S), Hadrat Ayesha says:
"A woman came to us and as she was leaving, I made a gesture suggesting that she is short. The Prophet (S) said: ***"you committed gheeba."***

A hadith from the Prophet (S):

> *"If you did gheeba and then did tawba (repented), you may be the last person to enter Janna. But If you did gheeba, and you did not repent, you may be the first one who enters Jahannam".*

The Prophet (S) also said:

> *"If you hear gossip about your brother/sister and you defend him/her, Allah will eliminate many of your evils in this and the next world. And if you remain quiet and do not do anything, your sin is 70 times more than the one who did the gheeba"*
>
> *"Sitting in a Masjid awaiting prayer is ibada as long as you don't use the time for gossip".*

10.4 Jealousy (Hasad)

Jealousy is a desire to see someone's advantage or blessing taken away from him. Jealousy is a vice that hurts first and foremost, the person who commits it.

> ***"The jealous person hurts himself before hurting others"*** ***Imam Sadiq (a)***
>
> ***"Jealousy consumes good deeds like fire consumes wood"*** ***Imam Baqir (a)***

Unfortunately, it is all too common that jealous feelings toward a person get translated into inappropriate acts, such as backbiting or a violent behavior against that person.

It is hard to completely avoid jealousy, but we have to train ourselves hard in order to avoid it. One Hadith mentioned to us what to do when we feel jealous, so that, our jealousy does not become a sin:

> *"…if you happen to be jealous, do not follow your jealousy with an evil act (against the person you are jealous at)"*

10.5 Suspicion

> ***"Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: and spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs (Gheebat). Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?" (Holy Qur'an; 49:12)***

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We should always have a good opinion about other people, not to assume the worst about them, not to suspect their actions and give them the benefit of the doubt.

One Hadith mentions that: if you **only** have suspicion about someone that he is hurting you behind your back, **do not start investigating based merely on your suspicion**. Most of the time, your suspicion turns out to not be true. If everyone acts based on suspicion, big social problems will occur in the community.

10.6 Spying

> ***" … And spy not on each other, or the fire will touch you" (Holy Qur'an; 49:12)***

Spying on your friends, brothers and sisters is haraam in Islam.

10.7 Superstition

If a task is presented to you and after studying it carefully you decided that the appropriate thing to do is to take a certain action. Then, you became superstitious about going ahead with this action, Islam tells you to proceed: go for it and do not hesitate.

10.8 Nicknaming and Joking

Generally, joking is disliked in Islam, except for mild jokes with the condition that no sinning is involved. Also, offensive and sarcastic nicknaming is condemned in the Qur'an.

> ***"O you who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other by (offensive) nicknames... " (Holy Qur'an; 49:11)***

Problems will occur when we label people with nicknames, or when we joke with others.

Making fun of people by calling them offending nicknames is a universal bad habit that is strongly disliked by Allah (S). We have to respect the rights and the feelings of others.

Many times, animosity between friends occurs because of nicknaming or joking. Nobody likes to be made fun of, especially in public. He/She will try to retaliate, then problems and fighting might take place.

Furthermore, degrading yourself in order to make others laugh and have fun is a terrible thing to do. The advice is: don't make a clown of yourself. Don't act weirdly and say strange and silly things just to make people laugh.

Our Prophet (S) said: *"A man who says something to make his companions laugh, falls (in value) like between the sky and the earth"*

In addition, Muslims should build up their character so they can face the challenges of life at a personal level as well as a community level. The Muslim should show a serious attitude so he/she can intelligently follow the occurring events in the world. Only then, his/her opinion would be taken seriously on matters that are important to the community.

This does not mean we don't try to have a sense of humor and joke mildly with our friends. Our prophet (S) used to humor his guests and companions sometimes.

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10.9 Prophetic Humor:

Our Prophet (S) said: *"I humor, but I don't say except the truth"*

An old lady came to the Prophet (S). He immediately told her *"An old lady never enters Jannah* (in the day of judgment)***"***. The lady cried. Then, the Prophet said *"That day you are not an old lady"*.

The Prophet (S) and Imam Ali (AS) were once eating dates. The Prophet was eating and placing the pits near Imam Ali. At the end Imam Ali had a big pile of pits and the Prophet had none. Then, the Prophet said, *"O Ali you eat too much"*.

Imam Ali answered: *"O Prophet of Allah the one who eats too much is the one who eats the dates whole, with the pits still inside of them"*.

10.10 Simulation (RIYA')

Simulation means doing a good deed for the sake of ostentation (showing off) rather than for the sake of Allah. It is great sin and it causes spiritual deterioration. The Holy Qur'an mentions:

> ***"… (they) show off to people and do not remember Allah except a little"***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 4:142)***

The Prophet (s) said:

> *"… the scariest thing that I fear for you is the minor idolatry (shirk). People asked what is the minor idolatry? He (s) answered: Simulation! On the Day of Judgment, Allah (s) says to the simulators, "go to those to whom you showed off during your lives and look to see if you can find your reward with them"*

There are different kinds of riya: riya in worshipping, like when the person spends more time in his prayer when he is among company.

The signs of the person who commits simulation is in this Hadith from Imam Ali (as):

> *"The simulator has three signs: he is active when among people, he is lazy when he is alone and he likes to be praised in all his affairs"*

The opposite of riya' is ikhlas (sincerity), which means doing everything for the sake of God alone, without accepting any rewards from anyone for what a person does.

Sometimes riay' is permissible or even desirable. For example, if one is openly generous with the intention of encouraging others to be generous as well.

10.11 Extravagance

Extravagance means to use too much of something when it is not necessary. It means WASTAGE. The Arabic word for this is pronounced as *ISRAAF.*

And the holy Qur'an says"

> ***"Do not squander your substance wastefully, for the wasteful are Satan's brothers" (Holy Qur'an; 25: 67)***

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Allah explains to us in the Holy Qur'an,:

> ***"O you who believe! Make not unlawful the good things which God has made lawful for you, But <u>commit not excess,</u> for God does not love those given to excess."***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 5:90)***

The Holy Qur'an says:

> ***"O children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for God does not love the wasters."***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 7:31)***

> *"Everything above what is needed is extravagance (israaf)* *Imam Ali (a)*

Reasons for Israaf include,

1) for the sake of showing off to others
2) buying something just because your neighbor has it, "keeping up with the Jones"

If we think of Allah whenever we spend the money He has given us, and think whether He would approve of our purchase, than we will never commit Israaf.

10.12 Lying

The Qur'an tells us to tell the truth, and not to cover it with lies.

> ***"And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when you know (it)"***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 2:42)***

Imam Ali Zainul 'Abedeen (AS) said:

> *"Avoid telling lies, whether in trivial or important matters, whether as a matter of fact or out of fun. The person who tells lies in trivial matters or in jest, shall develop a boldness to tell lies in important matters as well."*

Also, if you make a habit of lying you will start doing other things which are even worse. **One evil leads you to another.**

It is appropriate that a Muslim should not associate with a liar.

Imam Zainul 'Abedeen (AS) said that

> *"a liar is like a mirage which shows far off things to be nearer and the things which are near to be far off"*

10.13 Betraying Secrets and Breach of Promise

The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

> *"He who keeps no pledge has no religion"*
>
> *"He who is untrustworthy has no faith"*

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"A hypocrite is recognized by three signs:

1. *He lies when he talks,*
2. *He breaks his promises,*
3. *He betrays when trusted."*

Never make a promise which you cannot keep.
Also, never, unnecessarily, expose the secrets and faults of others.

The Prophet has said: ***"He who covers up the faults of a Muslim, Allah shall cover up his faults in this world and the next".***

10.14 Slander

Slander ruins a person's reputation. Slander is to spread rumors, and tell lies about people in order to damage their reputation. The intentions behind slandering vary between jealousy, and making political or economical gains. Slandering is such a bad deed, that the Holy Prophet (S) said that:

"A slanderer will not enter paradise."

Slandering breaks the community apart, and cause enmity and hatred. It is one of the worst sins, and goes hand in hand with backbiting and other social crimes.

Do not start spreading false rumors about any person. Many families have broken up, and communities have split because of this sin. So you have been warned of the consequences.

10.15 Hoarding

Hoarding means to collect things and pile them up on the side without ever really using them. It can either be a habit or out of fear that we might need to use these things in the future. Hoarding is bad since we are denying others by keeping things for ourselves.

A person who likes to hoard things is both greedy and a miser. He is greedy because he collects everything he can get his hands on. He is a miser because he most likely does not use the things he has, but just keeps them for the sake of keeping.

Hoarding also has a hidden meaning, which is, the person does not have trust in Allah (S) regarding the future. He thinks that he has to rely on hoarding in order to protect his unknown future.

10.16 Permissiveness

This means to be *too liberal, too free or too loose.*

Allah provided humans is with a quality known as *" Haya' "*. This means modesty, bashfulness and nobility all in one word.

When one is not careful, it is rather easy to fall into the trap of becoming permissive. For instance, in watching television, many of the programs tend to break the barrier of Haya' of their audience.

Permissiveness is one extreme of social behavior: to be too free with your desires. The other extreme is celibacy, which means to never get married and to stop your desires all together. Both these are extremes, and

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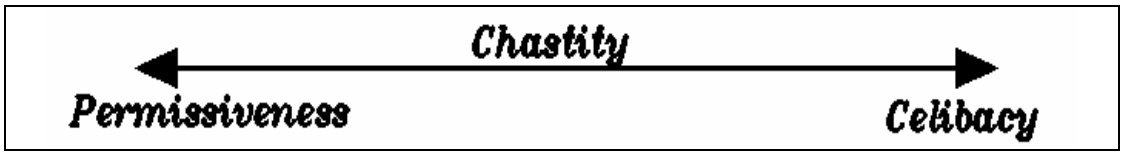
Islam says that extremes are wrong. Islam takes the middle path of chastity, where you are allowed to live a comfortable life within the boundaries of marriage.



The diagram shows 2 extreme ways in which society can behave, (i) being too permissive, ie letting the desires loose, and (ii) being celibate, ie stopping the desires all together.

Islam explains to us the concept of chastity which lies between these two extremes, and allows us to **CONTROL** our desire, rather than **STOPPING** them.

10.17 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Hujjat Saturday Workshop, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

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Chapter 11: Observing the Month of Ramadhan

"O you who believe, fasting was prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may be cautious" (Holy Qur'an; 1:183)

According to this verse, fasting increases our level of awareness which makes us watchful and careful with the laws of Allah (S).

11.1 Why do We Fast?

"So that the wealthy and the poor live similar lives and the wealthy become familiar with the hunger of the poor and try to help the needy" *Imam Sadiq (AS)*

11.2 What Happens in the Month of Ramadhan?

It all starts with the sighting of the moon. But, what is the wisdom behind sighting the moon? Why is it recommended? Why don't we stay indoors, and check on the internet exactly when the moon will be born?

By getting out of the comfort of our homes to do something out of the ordinary like trying to sight the tiny crescent, perhaps, Allah (S) is giving us a signal that major changes are about to take place in our lives. New good habits will replace old harmful ones. Repetitive uninspiring routines, we got used to for 11 months, will be replaced with rejuvenating practices. A personal revolution that emancipate and cleans us will take place. For instance:

- ✓ Watching TV every night and boringly flipping through the 100 channels will be replaced by reciting Du'a
- ✓ Visiting the Malls and shopping centers will be replaced by Visiting the Masjid every night
- ✓ Spending time chatting with friends will be replaced by reciting the Qur'an
- ✓ Eating and snacking will be replaced by Pondering about our behavior and our deeds

11.3 Importance of Praying and Fasting:

Our daily prayer helps us day to day in keeping us from committing haraam.

Our fasting helps us year to year from developing bad habits and routines. It essentially guides us back to the righteous path, as the above verse mentions.

11.4 Excerpts from the Prophet's (s) Speech Regarding the Month of Ramadhan

"The month of Allah has arrived with Blessings, Mercy and Forgiveness. Allah (S) counts it as the best of all months, its days are the best days, its nights are the best nights and its hours are the best hours". *Holy Prophet Muhammad (p)*

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11.5 The Benefits for Observing This Holy Month, According to the Prophet's Speech:

- You are invited to be the guests of Allah (S). (put all worries aside, Allah (S) is your Host)
- You are counted among the dignified and honorable.
- Your Breathing is Tassbeeh. (no or little work gets you lots of rewards)
- Your Sleeping is worshipping.
- Your deeds are accepted.
- Your du'a shall be answered.
- Doing one prescribed duty, such as Salaat, is worth 70 of the same duty in a different month.
- Reciting one 'Aya from the Qur'an is like finishing the whole Qur'an in a different month.
- The gates of Heaven are open.
- The gates of Hell are closed.
- Satans are in shackles.

11.6 What should we do during this Holy Month, According to the Prophet's Speech?

- Ask Allah (S) with sincere intention and purified hearts to make you successful in fasting it and reciting the Qur'an
- Remember in your hunger and thirst the hunger and the thirst of the Day of Judgment
- Give charity to your poor
- Respect your elders
- Have mercy on your young
- Get in touch with your relatives.
- Protect your tongues (from committing any backbiting)
- Avert your eye sight from what's haraam for you to look at
- Close your ears to what is haraam to listen to
- Be kind and worm to the orphans of others so that your orphans would be treated kindly
- Repent to Allah (S) for your sins
- Raise your hands while doing du'a during Salaat time, it is the best time
- Give dinner to fasting people. That is worth freeing a slave and forgiveness of your past sins
- Take it easy on who you have authority on (wife, children, employees …)
- Do a lot of Salawats on our Prophet (S)
- Recite the Qur'an

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11.7 Other Benefits of Fasting:

- It is a cure. ***"Fast and you will be cured"***

  "The gate to illness is the stomach"

- It teaches us patience and discipline.

  Muslims cope better than others during hardships and calamities.

- It gives us wisdom ***"Fasting brings wisdom"***

- It teaches us zuhd, so that we become strong against of the temptations of dunia.

- Crime rate in Muslim countries drop drastically in the month of Ramadhan.

11.8 Best Action in the Month of Ramadhan:

Imam Ali (AS) asked the Prophet (S), ***"What is the best action in this month?"***

The Prophet (S) replied: ***"Abstinence from committing haraam"***

11.9 Misconception about the Night of Qadr:

People mistakenly, think if they observe the night of Qadr and stay up all night, they have a chance to receive the full benefits of that night. They forget about the preparation process during the first two thirds of the month of Ramadhan.

We must practice and follow what the Prophet (S) has mentioned in His speech during the first two thirds of the month. Then, we might become eligible to receive the blessings of the night of Qadr.

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Chapter 12: Who Is A Believer?

Once Imam Ali (AS) was asked, who is a believer? He answered as to what the characteristics of a believer should include:

"The believer is one with whom peoples' life, wealth, and dignity are safe.
- People don't fear him or get intimidated by his presence.
- People don't fear him for their wealth and their belongings.
- People don't fear his/her tongue. He/she doesn't insult anyone.

When powerful, he forgives easily. He is generous in appropriate ways.
- He/She can control and suppress his anger and quickly forgive others when he is capable of exercising his right.
- He/She knows when to spend generously and when not to because it is wasting.

His behavior is gentle. His actions and walk reflect modesty.
- He/She doesn't offend anyone.
- He/She doesn't show off.
- He/She doesn't show arrogance or pride.

People enjoy his affection and calmness. He is ready to bear pain in order to comfort others.
- He/She treats people kindly.
- He/She sacrifices comfort for a good cause.

In friendship he is sincere. He honors his promises.
- He/She doesn't betray his/her friends.
- He/She goes through with his/her promises.

He helps the oppressed and is concerned about the deprived. He does not abandon those in distress; he tries to relieve their burdens.
- He/She doesn't turn a blind eye to people in need.
- He/She helps whenever he/she can.

He respects the rights of those who are absent. He accepts the apologies of those at fault.
- He/She never backbites others.
- He/She easily forgives.

He assists those who have assisted him.
- He/She doesn't forget a favor done to him/her.

He does not divulge (tell) peoples' secrets. He does not inquire into secret affairs which do not concern him.
- He/She doesn't expose their secrets, nor he tries to find out the secrets of others.

He sets a good example for those who succeed him.
- He/She does not misbehave in public.
- He/She does not create corruption in the community.
- He/She sets a good example for the youth.

His good deeds are not performed for the sake of being boastful.
- He/She does things for the sake of Allah (S) only.

He does not fall into the same difficulty twice."
- He/She is always careful, heedful, watchful and wise, so he/she doesn't make the same mistake twice.

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12.1 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: ***The Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa*, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

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Chapter 13: What Is Islam?

Many times, at school, at work or at social gatherings, Muslims face questions about their faith from their non-Muslim friends and curious individuals. Some of the questions that people usually ask are like the following:

What is Islam?
Tell us what the religion of Islam is about?
What does a Muslim do to fulfill his/her religious duties?

Answers that Muslims usually respond with are like the following. Islam is …

A way of life
The religion of justice
The religion of equality
The religion of ethics
The religion of peace
The religion of truth
The religion of moderation & middle ground
The religion of mercy & compassion
The religion of submission to God
The religion of modesty

All of these descriptions are good and tell us something about Islam. But one alone doesn't fully describe Islam. We need to have well structured answers and a better description that would make an impact on the heart of the curious person.

Let's recall the definition that the Prophet (S) gave us about Islam:

13.1 "Islam is Obedience to the Creator and Serving His Creation"

We see that Islam consists of values, rules and laws that deal with two things: the relationship between the Muslim and his/her creator (worshiping) and the relationship between the Muslim and the people and things around him/her (social and environmental obligations).

Now, let's turn to Imam Sadiq (AS) for an answer to the question, what is Islam?

Once a non believer asked Imam Sadiq (AS) this question: **"In one word tell me what is Islam?"** Apparently, the man wanted only one word to give him a good understanding and a full description of Islam.

Imam Sadiq's reply was ***"Islam is the religion of Inssaf".***

The closest English translation of the word Inssaf is ***Fairness,*** or to be fair to the best of one's ability and in the best possible way. So, according to Imam Sadiq (AS)

13.2 "Islam is the Religion of Fairness"

Let's now try to analyze and study the depth of Imam Sadiq's statement, so we can learn some facts about Islam.

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- First, Imam Sadiq (AS) chose carefully the word ***fairness*** over many other words, like justice for instance, because it is closer to the heart, more realistic and more descriptive.

- Second, all people, even non believers, like to be treated with fairness. Even the worst tyrant, if he was cheated in something, he would cry "**it is not fair**".

Using the above two sayings by our Prophet (S) and Imam Sadiq (AS) as a criterion, we can say that Islam teaches us ethics to manage all our relationships with Allah (S) (worshiping) and with the world (social obligations and transactions) in a fair manner and in the best possible way. As a matter of fact, Islam makes the Muslim a **fair** manager in all of his/her affairs and relationships.

By reading and studying the Qur'an and the sayings of the prophet and Imams (AS), by attending speeches interacting with scholars and Muslim friends, Muslims acquire the needed knowledge to be able to fairly manage their relationships with the outside world.

Every Muslim has authority but also has responsibilities:

> **"All of you have authority (over others) and all of you are responsible for them"**

13.3 What did Allah (S) Put Us In Charge of?

We can come up with a long list, but mainly, Allah (S) put us in charge of: our time, wealth, physical power, influential power, desires, inner self (Nafs), eyes, ears, tongue, limbs, beauty, thoughts and intellect.

A Muslim tries to carefully manage all of the above in order to be **fair** in his/her relationships with Allah (S), him/herself, his/her parents, the elders, friends, nature, natural resources, animals, and the future generations. Actually, a good Muslim spends all of his life trying to manage with **fairness** all these relationships, to the best of his/her ability.

On a daily basis, every person must deal with many issues, and make many decisions, big and small. Allah (S) gave the individual powers and authority and He is looking at him/her to see how he/she manages.

13.4 How does a Muslim Manage his/her Time in a Fair Way?

He/She allocates a fair portion of his/her time for every task like worshiping Allah (S), taking care of him/herself, studying, working, playing sports, spending time with family, attending religious activities, visiting with relatives, spending time with friends, doing community services, … etc. A Muslim can not put too much time on one chore because it won't be fair to the others. Allah (S) does not ask us to be exact on every minute of our time, but rather, He wants us to be as **fair** as possible. And remember that:

> ***"Allah does not make you handle more than your capacity"***

13.5 How do We be Fair when we Worship Allah?

The best way to try to be fair is when we allocate an appropriate time for our prayer and other worshipping activities. Also when we pray we have to give full attention to what we are saying. Furthermore, we should accept the rules of Islam even if sometimes we don't fully understand them.

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13.6 How can we be Fair to the Holy Qur'an?

Is it fair that we have the authentic word of God in our hands and we ignore it? We should be eager to know what Allah (S) has said in His Holy book. So, we must set some time for reading and understanding the Qur'an.

13.7 How do we be Fair to our Bodies?

We have to be fair to our body by being clean, by exercising to stay in shape, by getting the needed rest and sleeping time, and by being fair and moderate with the quantity of food we eat. Remember that: ***"the gate to illness is the stomach"***

13.8 How do we Manage our Eyes, Ears, Tongue, Limbs, and Thoughts?

So that we are **fair** to others and we don't commit any mischief.

13.9 How do we Train our Nafs (Inner Self)?

So, our Nafs does not go wild and create corruption and **unfairness** for us as well as others. We must be in full control of it and direct it toward good.

> *"The nafs is like a wild horse, and you are riding upon him, if you move your attention for one second, he will throw you off."* *Imam Ali (AS)*

13.10 How do we Fairly Manage and Control Our Desires?

So that, we don't become slaves for these desires but still live a comfortable life.

13.11 How do we Manage our Wealth?

By earning it from Halaal sources, not wasting it in vain, and not being miserly or greedy. We have to be **fair** and moderate.

13.12 How do we Use our Physical Power?

Using it for good causes and never abuse others.

Somebody might say that Hijab is not fair to females. They ask us: Isn't hijab too harsh and restrictive on females? Or why is Hijab wajib on females?

Islam teaches us the Hijab is wajib because it brings **fairness** to the society by preventing corruption. The Muslim female manages her beauty in a **fair** way by dressing up modestly. It is **fair** to the females since it protects them from abuse and brings them respect, and also, it is **fair** to the males since it prevents unnecessary provocation. So, Hijab helps spreading calm, stability and fairness in society.

13.13 How do we use our Influential Power without Hurting or Taking Advantage of Others?

Islam teaches us about how to fairly manage our relationship with others. This is the biggest, most demanding and most sensitive task for a Muslim to manage.

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13.14 What is the Fair Way to Deal with our Parents?

Islam tells us how special and important this relationship is.

13.15 What is the Fair Way to Deal with our Neighbors?

Neighbors have a special treatment in Islam.

13.16 What is the Fair Way to Deal with our Relatives?

Relatives also have special rights in Islam.

13.17 What is the Fair Way to Deal with our Friends?

What are our obligations toward them?

13.18 What is the Fair Way to Deal with our Enemy?

We have to be fair there too.

13.19 How do We Deal with Nature, Resources and the Environment?

We have to be fair to the future generations.

A Muslim should always ask the question: is it **fair** to do this? And should always try to observe and ponder upon the **fairness** in the Islamic rule he/she is using.

In conclusion, when we are asked: What is Islam?
We can answer by saying: Islam is a set of values and rules that tell us how to worship Allah and how to conduct and manage our relationships with others in a **fair** manner. Islam teaches us how to be fair, to the best of our abilities, and in the best possible way in all of our relationships and affairs in this world.

13.20 Try to Answer these Questions:

- Is believing in evolution fair?
- Is fasting fair?
- Is cutting the fingers of the thief fair or it is too harsh? Discuss
- Is it fair to sin? After all the bounties that Allah (S) blessed us with and the warnings that He sent us.

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SECTION II: Islamic Beliefs (Aqaid)

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Chapter 14: Knowledge

(Seek it, Preserve it, Apply it, & Spread it)

14.1 Seek It:

Throughout history, Prophets brought humanity a wealth of knowledge and urged people to acquire knowledge wherever it might be. The Holy Prophet said:

> *"It is obligatory for every Muslim, man and woman to acquire knowledge".*

so that we would:

- Know our Creator and learn the truth about the creation
- Not fall in the trap of shaytan and his associates
- Improve the quality of our lives and satisfy our needs

The Holy Qur'an warned us not to blindly follow the people before us like cattle.

Let's look at some Verses and Hadith that talk about knowledge:

> ***"And Say, My Lord increase me in knowledge" (Holy Qur'an; 20:114)***
>
> ***"…Say are those who know equal with those who know not? …" (Holy Qur'an; 39:9)***
>
> ***"Allah exalt those who believe among you and those who have knowledge to high ranks" (Holy Qur'an; 58:11)***
>
> ***"And whosoever gives no heed to My warnings shall live in distress" (Holy Qur'an; 20:124)***
>
> *"Seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim … with knowledge we obey The Lord … and we know the halaal and the haraam …" Prophet Muhammad (S)*
>
> *"There is no honor like knowledge" Imam Ali (AS)*
>
> *"Knowledge is better than wealth by seven things:*
> *Knowledge is the Prophets inheritance, wealth is the Pharos inheritance;*
> *Knowledge does not lessen with spending, wealth lessens with spending;*
> *Knowledge protects its carrier, wealth needs a protector;*
> *Knowledge enter with its carrier to his grave, wealth stays behind;*
> *Knowledge is for only the believer, wealth happens to believer & disbeliever;*
> *People need a man of Knowledge for their religion, they don't need a wealthy man;*
> *Knowledge strengthen the man to walk the Sirat, wealth prevents him"*
> *Imam Ali (AS)*

Prophet Muhammad (S) said:

> *"The scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets"*
>
> *"Learning is better than worshiping"*
>
> *"Whosoever from my Ummah memorizes 40 Hadith that people need in their religious practices, Allah (S) will resurrect him as a scholar in the day of resurrection"*
>
> *"Allah makes the road to Janna easy for one who takes a step on the road to acquiring knowledge"*

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14.2 Preserve It:

As the Hadith says: *"Preserve your knowledge in writing"*

Therefore, we recommend that all the Upper Graders in the school of Ahlul Bayt keep a special personal notebook in which they start writing some of the Qur'anic verses and Hadith that they hear in class or in speeches.

You should write down the sayings that enlighten you and mean something valuable to you. Write the sayings you want to adopt and use in your daily life and maybe teach to others later on. This is not homework, but rather your own personal document that you cherish. It is your reference that you can use to recall things you have learned in the past. It will come in handy for you when you discuss important subjects with other people.

It is not a bad idea to purchase a good quality and maybe stylish notebook since you might keep it for a long time.

Writing is important because most people are forgetful. They cannot retain all that they hear. Sometimes, one wishes to remember something he/she had heard previously.

One Hadith says: *"The plague of learning is forgetting"*

14.3 Apply It:

"Knowledge calls for applying, otherwise it will leave" *Imam Sadiq (AS)*

If the person does not apply knowledge in his daily life, after a while he/she will forget a lot of it.

"Nothing blesses knowledge like applying it" *Imam Ali (AS)*

In the Day of Judgment, some people, while entering Heaven, will be surprised to see their Islamic teachers in Hell. They say to them: how come you are in Hell and we are entering Heaven because of your teaching and disciplining. Their answer would be: we did not apply what we used to teach you.

14.4 Spread It:

Knowledge is not wisely used if we keep it to ourselves. Our duty is not only to retain knowledge but also to teach it to others. Imam Sadiq (AS) said:

"Everything has Zakaat, and the Zakaat of knowledge is spreading it" Imam Sadiq (a)

Remember that if Allah (S) guided someone to the righteous path by your effort, it is worth more to you than the wealth of the whole world.

"May Allah prosper the person who heard my saying, memorized it, comprehended it and retold it as he had heard it, since a carrier of knowledge may not be a scholar, and perhaps one may transport knowledge to a more learned one"

A-Sayeda Fatima (AS) used to write down what her father Prophet Muhammad (S) used to teach her. Then, she used to teach it to the ladies of Ansar in Madina. The ladies of Ansar then used to teach it to their sons and daughters. That's how a lot of the Islamic knowledge got transferred from one generation to the next, till it reached us. Without Sayeda Fatima (AS), her writings and her teaching, we would not have known a lot of the things we now know about Islam.

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So, let's try to follow the footsteps of Sayeda Fatima (AS). Try to write at least 40 Qur'anic verses or Hadith every school year in your special notebook. That amounts to about one Verse or Hadith for every school day. Try to write the interpretation too and maybe your own notes. Keep your notebook neat and organized, because you might keep it for a long time.

14.5 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Hujjat Saturday Workshop, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

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Chapter 15: The Existence of the Creator

15.1 Why should we know whether God exists?

Later we will learn about the ways that lead us to know Allah (S). But before that, the questions we should answer are: why should we even bother with that? Is it necessary to know whether God exists or not? Wouldn't life be much simpler if we did not ask this question in the first place? To answer these questions, think of the following points:

15.2 Search for the Truth:

Because of the intellect and the instinctive nature (Fitra) in the human being, people are always searching for the truth. Human beings always ask themselves how they came upon the earth; who brought them here; what will be their ultimate end; who is behind creation, etc. These questions need answers, and cannot be ignored by suppression. Those people, who are curious and intelligent, need to answer these questions in order to satisfy their search for the truth.

Take for example a person who just discovered that he is adopted and that his current parents are not his real parents. He becomes obsessed with curiosity to find out who his real parents are and the history of events that took place since he was born.

15.3 We Need Help:

People are vulnerable in this world and are threatened by many kinds of dangers and challenges. Throughout the ages, people have needed help every moment of their lives. Namely, they look for three kinds of help.

1. Protection from overwhelming undesirable and catastrophic events. People figured that whoever brought the creation to being must be able to protect them against these dangerous events.
2. Help with the necessities of their daily life, like finding remedies for deadly illnesses, etc… People think, and they are right, that whoever created this vast and sophisticated world must have the answers to all of their needs.
3. Help in organizing their social life so there is peace and justice and there is no bloodshed, corruption or oppression. People rightly assume that whoever created this highly organized and harmonious universe must have the correct laws and rules people should follow, which offer a decent and fair living for everyone.

15.4 To Thank the Provider:

Good etiquette demands that we thank all those who carry out favors for us, whether big or small. The more the favors are, the more the appreciation and gratitude we should show. Take the example of a person who stays as a guest at someone's home. All preparations have been carried out to meet his needs. He has a room ready for him, food on the table, clothes washed and dried, etc. Would he not want to thank the person who did this for him? Good manners dictate that he should show his gratitude for the favors received, by thanking the host. If he does not know who the host is, he should make an effort to find out. To ignore that, and just enjoy the benefits, would be considered ill-mannered and rude.

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When we come into the world, we see that there are a lot of blessings and favors that have been prepared for us. We have a wonderful body, a beautiful earth, trees, fruits, flowers, animals and numerous other blessings all of which are for our use and benefit. Surely we need to ask from whom these blessings came, in order to thank the Provider. It would be most ungracious if there really was a Provider and we did not bother to find out and thank Him.

15.5 Basis for Life:

How does the Creator want me to run my life? in regards to my behavior, my attitude and my goals in life. The Creator of this sophisticated universe must have a plan that He wanted me to utilize.

The way we live our lives is tremendously affected by whether we believe in a God or not. A person who does not believe in God would base his life on material and worldly benefits only. He would see no benefit in doing good deeds, as he would have no belief in the Hereafter. This person's outlook would be completely different from one who believes in a God, and consequently believes in the life after this world.

15.6 Avoid Possible Harm:

We don't want to miss any warnings or instructions, the Creator communicated to humanity, in order to avoid possible danger or harm. With the many overwhelming events that are happening around us, it would be foolish not to try to find out about the creator's warnings and instructions.

Whenever we are warned about something, we immediately take heed and find out about the possibility of danger. For example, when there is a scare of a particular disease in a country, and the doctors warn that many people may die of it, most of the people of that country at once take heed and take the necessary precautions.

15.7 Ways of Knowing Allah:

We can get to know about Allah (S) through two different ways:

1. The inner way, from within ourselves, and through our own instinct
2. The outer way, by looking outward at the world around us, and exploring the various existing signs

15.8 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following book: Lessons about: **Allah, Prophet, Justice, Leadership, Resurrection, by AyatAllah Nasir Makarim Shirazi**

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Chapter 16: Knowing Allah (SWT)

(The Inner Way)

When a human follows his own instinct, before listening to anything else to influence him, there is a voice inside him which tells him there is a being greater than himself who should be worshipped. Thus, we see that throughout history, most people have always believed in God. Even those tribes who live far away from civilization, who are in isolation from the rest of the world, will still believe in some Divine being.

This natural instinct of the human being is called *Fitra* in Islamic terminology. There are many things which a human being knows through his fitra. The love of goodness and beauty, for example, does not have to be taught. It is instinctive. So, is the avoidance of harm and injury. Also, every person, by nature, knows that killing and stealing are acts which he should not do.

When a woman bears a child, she does not have to be told that she must love and protect it, and look after its needs. She does that instinctively, because of the nature she has been endowed with.

> ***"In harmony with the fitra (that) Allah has made for people" (Holy Qur'an; 30:30)***

A man once came to the Imam Ja`far as Sadiq (AS) and asked him to convince him that there was a God.

Imam asked him: *"Have you ever traveled by ship?"*

The man's answer was: Yes.

Then Imam said**:**

> *"Did it ever happen that the ship sprang a leak and there was nobody to save you from drowning in the fierce ocean?"*

Yes!

> *"At that dangerous moment, and in that state of despair, did you have the feeling that an infinite and almighty power could save you from that terrible fate?"*

Yes!

> *"That power you were hoping would save you was God."*

A Question: If the belief in God is instinctive, why are there many human beings who do not believe in God? Is the instinct not present in them?

Answer: Although Allah places the instinct in human beings, people sometimes choose to suppress the instinct, or ignore it until it fades away. Take the example of the mother's love for her child. Yet we hear of cases, although rare, when mothers kill their own children. Does the mother not have a mother's instinct to love and protect her children? She does, but other factors affect her so much that she goes against her instincts and destroys her children.

Although the instinct to believe in God is present in human beings, some choose to suppress it in order to reject the belief in a Creator. Reasons for doing this include: ignorance by choice, arrogance, and running away from responsibility which faith would bring.

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16.1 Instinct to Believe in God Strongest at Certain Times:

Although the instinctive belief in God is always there, it is strongest at two times:

In difficulties: When a human being faces a problem, or is going through a hard time, the instinctive belief in God becomes very strong. Even those who have not bothered much about the belief in God will turn to Him in times of grief or fear. At such times, they know that the only being who can help them is God.

In this way, difficulties are sometimes actually blessings, because they turn a person toward God. If human beings were always happy and experienced no hardships, they might turn away from God.

At the moment of death: When a person knows that he is dying, the instinct in God is extremely strong. Even if he had rejected faith in God throughout his life, at such a time he would affirm his faith in God.

The Qur'an tells us about Pharaoh that

> ***"When drowning overtook him, he said: I believe that there is no god but He, in whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims" (Holy Qur'an; 10:90)***

Of course it was too late for him. At the time of death no affirmations or repentances are accepted.

Even pondering over the death of someone else can make the instinctive belief in God strong.

16.2 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Az-Zahraa Madressah, Vancouver, Canada**

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Chapter 17: Knowing Allah (SWT)

(The Outer Way)

The second way of knowing God is through the world around us. It is the outer way.

There is order in the Universe, and many forms of wonderful and astonishing acts of nature take place every day. As we see living things around us, it is necessary to think about them and ask the following question:

1) Who created all these living things? Did they come upon the earth by chance, or by the will of a supreme power?

2) Who made this perfect system in the world? Science has discovered many astonishing facts about the creation of the human body, animals, and the way everything in the world is designed exactly the way it should be. Was this just by accident, or adaptation, etc?

Then we ponder the wonderful way in which everything has been created. If we see there is beauty, order, wisdom, knowledge, etc, in the creation of things, we know that the being who created them also has these qualities. An ignorant being, devoid of good qualities, could not have given these qualities to the things it creates.

Human beings often walk through life blindly. They see with their eyes, but do not think about what they see. That is why in the holy Qur'an, Allah often invites us to ponder about His signs present in the world. One example is the following verse:

> ***"Most surely in the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, and the alteration of the night and the day, there are signs for people who understand" (Holy Qur'an; 3:189)***

Imam Ali (AS) says:

> *"Worship of Allah is not a lot of prayers, but real worship is pondering on the signs of Allah"*

17.1 Observations that Lead to God:

Numerous examples can be presented to demonstrate that a great power is responsible for the creation of the Universe.

Whenever we see a beautiful painting, or a work of art, we know that there must be a skilled artist behind it. We need not see the artist, or even know his name. We just know that there must be one who has made that particular piece of art. This is because we know, without being told, that every effect must have a cause. The piece of art is a sign that proves the existence and skill of an artist.

When we take a walk in the forest, and see some footsteps of a large animal, we know at once that an animal has passed by the same route. We have not seen the animal, nor have heard from anyone that there was an animal walking on that path. We know this however, because of the same cause and effect rule. There can be no footprints on a path without a creature walking on it. The footprint is a sign that proves the passing of the animal.

Imam Ali (AS) said:

> *"The traces of human's feet indicate a man's trek. Does not this magnificent Universe with all its sublimity, point to the existence of the Almighty Allah. . .?"*

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An old woman was spinning yarn. Someone asked her why she believed in God. She stopped her hand and the spindle stopped. She said: "You see a simple spindle needs a hand to make it revolve. Can you think that this sun, moon, these stars, all this world, moves without any guiding hand?"

17.2 An Argument against Chance:

Using simple mathematics, we can prove that it would be impossible for the world to be created by chance. The following examples will show with calculated numbers the probability or chance of one particular thing happening.

Put 10 coins in a bag, numbered from 1 to 10. Shake the bag, and without looking, try to take out the coins in the right order, 1 to 10. Mathematically, the chance of first taking out coin no.1 is one in ten. The chance of taking 1 and then 2 is one in ninety. 1, 2 and 3 in succession is one in 720. Your chance of taking out all the coins from number 1 to 10 in the right order would reach the unbelievable figure on less than one chance in 3.6 million. That means you may have to try that many times (if possible) to *perhaps* be able to take out the coins in the right order.

For the world to exist as it does today, so many conditions are necessary, that it is not possible that all of it could be by chance. A Swiss mathematician by the name of Charles Eugen Guye has made the calculations necessary for chance to form a single living cell. Each cell of living creatures is made up of 5 elements, in exact proportions for it to function well. The chance that from all the elements in nature, these 5 would come together, in the amounts and procedure required, is one chance in 10^{160} (To understand this amount write 160 zeros after the number 1). For just one single cell to occur by chance would require 10^{243} years. There are billions of cells in one human body alone. To calculate the chance of the cells being formed, and taking on different functions to form the human body, is an impossible task.

The example of the cell is just one small example amongst the millions of examples that could be cited to show the impossibility of creation by chance. So many exact conditions are necessary for life on earth that they could not possibly exist by chance. The earth rotates on its axis at 1000m an hour. If it rotated at 100m per hour; our days and nights would be ten times as long. The hot sun would then burn up the vegetation during the long day, and everything would freeze during the long night. The sun is just far away enough from the earth to warm us up enough. If it gave only half of its present radiation, we would freeze, and it give a half more than it does now, we would be roasted. If the moon was closer than it is now, the tides would be so enormous that twice a day all the continents would have been submerged. If the ocean was a few feet deeper, all the carbon dioxide and oxygen would be absorbed, and no vegetable life would exist.

Because of these, and a million other reasons, we believe it is not possible that life was created by chance.

17.3 Extracts from Hadith el-Mufaddal:

Hadithel Mufaddal is the narration by the sixth Imam (AS) to one of his companions, Mufaddal bin Umar. Mufaddal asked the Imam to give him some answers to counter the arguments of the atheists who denied the existence of God. Consequently, Imam Sadiq narrated some of the wonders of creation. This narration took place over a period of some days, and was written by Mufaddal. The following are some excerpts from the book.

> *O Mufaddal! The structure of the Universe is the foremost proof and argument for the existence of Almighty Allah - how the parts thereof have been set together and are possessed of elegant workmanship and design. . . This Universe is comparable to a house furnished with all articles necessary for human beings. The sky is like a canopy. The earth is spread like a carpet, while the stars. . . appear as lamps alight in their places.*

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O Mufaddal! Don't you see that everything big or small has been created in a flawless plan without fault or error? Just see the advantage that occurs to a child from weeping. There is a fluid in the child's brain which if not drained off may cause trouble or illness, even the loss of an eye. The discharge of the fluid from its brain leaves it healthy and the eyes brighter. . . Just consider the various organs of the body, the functions each one is required to perform, and the perfection of design that underlies each. Both hands are meant to handle business, both feet are meant for movement, the eyes are to see with, the mouth is to take in food, the stomach to digest it, the liver to extract its nutrition for distribution to the various parts of the body after manufacturing it into blood . . . you shall find that every organ is exactly fitted to perform its specific functions, and is perfectly designed.

O Mufaddal! Do you think that if a man enters a house and sees it supplied with all human needs, the whole house full of treasures, and everything placed with a definite purpose, he could imagine that all those things have been arranged by themselves without anyone to plan it? Then how can any rational being suggest that this world and all its contents have come by themselves?

O Mufaddal! Just consider the mercy of Allah toward animals in furnishing their bodies with a covering of different kinds of hair to protect them against winter hardships. And they have been gifted with hoofs, cleft and uncleft, or padded feet. They have neither hands nor palms nor fingers to spin and weave, so their clothing is made part of their bodily build without renovation and changing.

O Mufaddal! Just consider the physical build of the bird as it was ordained to fly high in the air. It has been gifted with a light body and a compact constitution. It has only two feet instead of four. . . it is gifted with a sharp chest to cut through the air just as a boat is built to cut through the water. . .the whole body is covered with feathers to get filled with air for high flights.

17.4 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Az-Zahraa Madressah, Vancouver, Canada**

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Chapter 18: Allah's Communications to Mankind

Allah (S) has blessed mankind by sending them four different communications. The purpose of these communications is to let people recognize the righteous path and achieve salvation. Two of these communications are of the creational type and the other two are of the written and documented type.

18.1 First Communication (Our good Instinctive Human Nature):

Allah (S) created people with a beautiful gift: Their good instinctive human nature "**Fitra**".

The Holy Qur'an mentions: ***"In harmony with the fitra (that) Allah has made for people" 30:30***

Let's list a few of the many things that are communicated to us through Fitra

- The deep feeling inside of us that tells us about the existence of the Creator
- The appreciation of goodness and beauty is born with us and don't have to be taught to us
- Our ability to distinguish good from bad and right from wrong
- The inner knowledge in us which makes us aware that acts like lying, stealing, unlawful killing etc… are bad and should not be committed
- By Fitra, even in the most liberal societies, people know that the right way to have a relationship between a male and a female and start a family is through an announced marriage; and any relationship outside marriage is not normal and looks suspicious

Although Allah places the good instinctive nature in people, they sometimes choose to suppress it, or ignore it until it fades away. Take the example of the mother's love for her children. Yet we hear of cases, although rare, when mothers kill their own children. In spite of the strong love, other factors affect her so much that she goes against her nature and gets rid of her children.

In addition, although Fitra is versatile and effective, it cannot address many of the issues and problems that we face in our lives. Other types of communications are needed for that purpose.

18.2 Second Communication (Through His creation and Signs):

Allah (S) communicates to us through His creation and His signs. We learn a great deal about Allah (S) and His attributes by looking at what He has created. We also learn great moral lessons with this communication.

> ***"We shall show them our signs in the horizons and in themselves" (Holy Qur'an; 41:53)***

Take as an example the trees and try to think about what they provide for people: delicious fruits, material to build houses and furniture, shade, better and healthier climate, scenery and landscape that make life more enjoyable, papers, fire wood, roots that hold the soil so mud slides are prevented, wind barriers and ingredients for medicine.

For thoughtful people, by pondering upon the creation of the trees, it is as if the trees are communicating something to them. The trees, silently, are informing them about the attributes of Allah (S), how: generous, wise, merciful, expert, gentle, vast, kind, thoughtful and capable He is.

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We can learn similar lessons by looking at the creation of our bodies, animals, planets and stars.

The signs of Allah (S) also carry lessons to us. Earthquakes for example remind us how vulnerable we are and how short life can be. That leads us to become humble, not to waist any time, always look to do good deeds and stay away from committing any haraam.

People who don't ponder upon the creation and the signs of Allah (S) do not heed what Allah (S) has communicated to them. They are like animals or worse. They are also described in the Qur'an as blind.

18.3 Third Communication (the Qur'an and Hadith; the Descending Communication):

The progress of the human societies makes social interaction between people more intricate, more complicated and more sophisticated. Therefore, a different, more comprehensive, more explicit and well documented communication is always needed. This communication should have all the necessary laws with which people can manage their lives in a fair and organized manner. That's why Allah (S), through the course of history, has sent us prophets and holy books as communications. The last communication was the Qur'an, delivered to humanity by Prophet Muhammad (S).

The Qur'an is sent for all generations. It is vast in content and addresses every aspect of people's lives at all times, present and future. Because of that, it's interpretation requires people who are deeply rooted in knowledge and have a divine link with Allah (S). These people are Prophet Muhammad (S) and the Imams (AS). Without them, a great part of this communication would be unusable. As a matter of fact, these infallibles and the Qur'an are inseparable.

A person who rejects this communication is rejecting the book of Allah (S) and His messengers.

18.4 Fourth Communication (The Du'a; the Ascending Communication):

Because there is a great necessity for people to communicate back with Allah (S), He provided them with a communication that is written and documented. This communication is the Du'a.

Through His appointed Prophets and Imams, Allah (S) delivered to people a beautiful collection of supplications (Du'as) with which they can eloquently communicate back with Him. These du'as perfected the manners on how best to communicate back with Allah (S).

What do people need to communicate back to Allah (S)?

- Their thanks and appreciation for all the bounties He bestowed on them
- Their praise to Him and their admiration and glorification of His attributes
- Their pleas about how weak and vulnerable they are in dealing with the problems they face in this world
- Their apologies for not following the various communications He has sent to them, without having any excuses
- Their needs and their polite requests for solutions to their problems

A person who does not communicate back with Allah (S) is behaving proudly and arrogantly since he thinks he can be self sufficient and can manage his life on his own.

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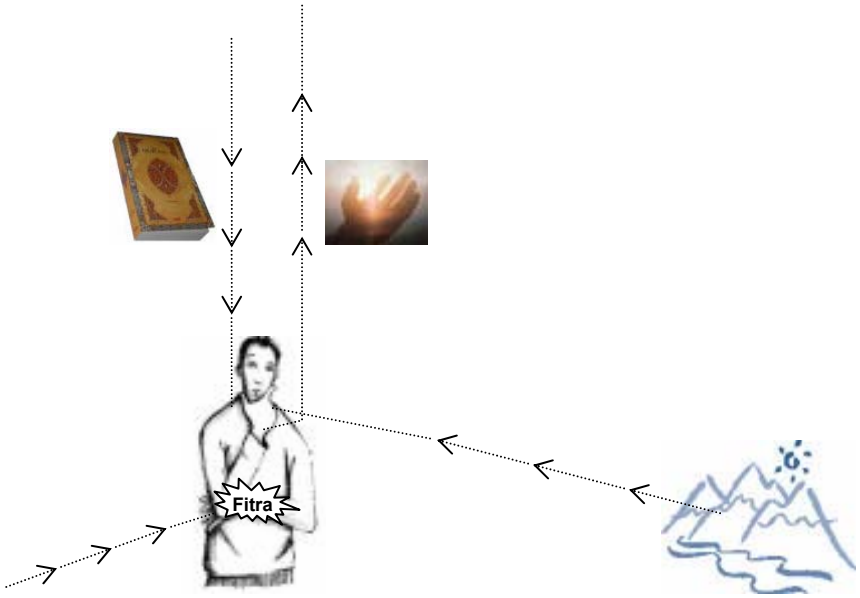
"Ask Me; I answer you, those who are too proud to ask Me will enter hell" Qur'an 40:60



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Chapter 19: The Concept of Fear and Hope

19.1 The State of the Good Believer (Between Fear and Hope):

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS) was asked about the contents of the will that Luqman left for his son. The Imam replied:

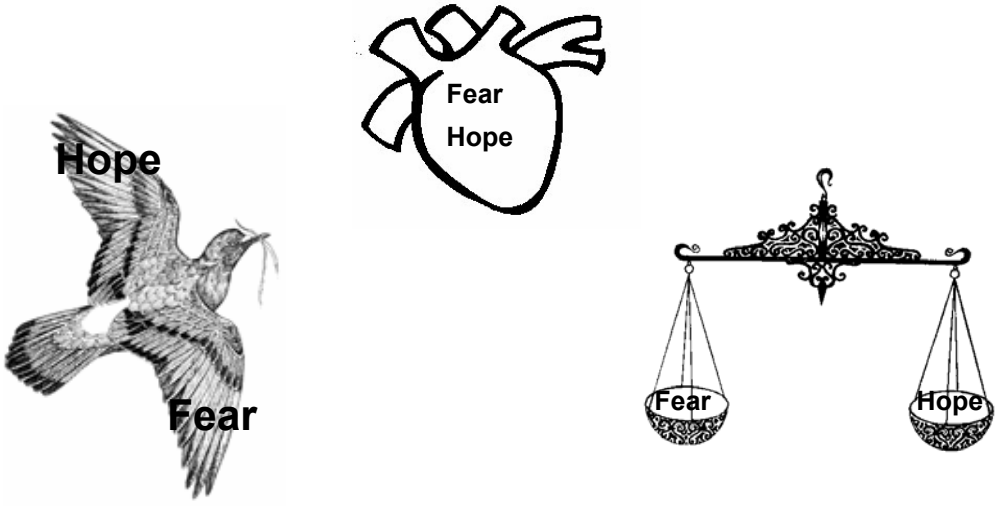
> *"There were some wonderful things in it; and the best of all of the things he said to his son was - Have such a fear of Allah that were you to come to Him with the virtues of the two worlds, He would still punish you, and put such a hope in Allah that were you to come to Him with the sins of the two worlds, He would still have mercy on you"*

Then Imam added:

> *"My father used to say - there is no mu'min who does not have two lights in his heart - the light of fear and the light of hope, were these to be measured, one would not exceed the other…."*

The human being must therefore never close his/her eyes to his/her shortcomings in fulfilling the orders of Allah (S), nor should he/she ever take his/her eyes off the mercy of Allah.

The simile given here of fear and hope in Allah is that of the wings of a bird. When fear and hope are equal and balanced in a mu'min, just like the wings of a bird make its flight perfect, the mu'min's ascent to Allah is perfect. When one of them is lacking, it makes the bird lose its ability to fly. When both fear and hope in Allah are missing, just like a bird without wings that falls down, a mu'min's striving fails.



Fear and Hope must be equal in the heart of the believer

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19.2 Fearing Allah:

There are various levels and degrees of fear in accordance with the level of knowledge and eeman a mu'min has.

> ***"…indeed only those of His devotees who have knowledge fear Allah…."***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 35:28)***

The first level of **fear is that of His punishment**. As knowledge increases, **one fears His anger**. When perfection is achieved, **one fears separation from Him**. One who fears Him only because of His punishment runs away from Him, while one who fears separation from Him runs toward Him.

In Du'a Kumayl, we are taught by Imam Ali (AS) to plead:

> *"…and my Rabb, suppose that I am able to bear Your punishment, how can I bear separation from You?….."*

The person who fears Allah contemplates on the justice of Allah, death, the day of Qiyama, the accounting (hisaab) and the scales (mizan) in relation to his sins. Reflecting about the verses of Qur'an and the ahadith relating to these topics also increases one's fear of Allah.

It is reported in Al-Kafi that Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS) has said:

> *"…The mu'min stands between two dreadful things; his/her past sins regarding which he does not know what Allah will do (with him), and the remainder of his life, regarding which he does not know what more sins he will commit therein. So he does not wake up except in a state of fear, and nothing keeps him righteous except fear."*

19.3 Being Hopeful:

It is reported in Al-Kafi from Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (AS):

> *"The Prophet (S) said: Allah says - Those who perform deeds for My sake should not, for My reward, trust the deeds they have done, for even if they worked for all their lives in My service and ibada, they would fall short ..., rather they should rely upon My mercy and have hope in My grace and find contentment in their good thoughts of Me; for indeed My mercy will reach them, My acceptance will go forth to them, and My forgiveness will envelop them..."*

No creature of Allah can be devoted to Allah as He deserves. Even the Prophet (S) - the most perfect human being used to say in his du'a:

> *"We are not devoted to You as You deserve to be devoted to, and We do not know You as You deserve to be known"*

It is reported in some ahadith that on the day of Qiyama, Allah's mercy shall be so abundant that even Shaytan will become hopeful and aspire for Allah's pardon!

19.4 False Hope:

However, one must be careful of differentiating between hope and delusion (false hopes). It may be that a person may be deluded while thinking to be a person with hope in Allah. If one belittles the commands of Allah, and does not follow them and then has hopes, then he/she is deluded. However, those who are

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committed to obedience of Allah, and have His greatness and mercy imprinted on their hearts, is filled with hope.

It is reported in Al-Kafi, from Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS):

> *"There are some people who commit sins and say -we are hopeful. They remain in this condition until death comes to them. They are a people who have been swept away by false hopes. They lie, they are not the hopeful ones; for indeed one who has hope in something pursues it, and one who fears something, flees from it."*

19.5 Fearing Other than Allah:

One who hopes In other than Allah and fears other than Him will be unsuccessful and disillusioned.

Allah (S) says in the Qur'an:

> ***"Indeed it is the Shaytan who makes you fear his friends; but do not fear them, and fear Me if you are mu'mineen." (Holy Qur'an; 3:175)***

It is said that for one who fears something/someone other than Allah or hopes for anything from other than Him, all doors close upon that person and fear predominates, veiling the person's nafs with 70 veils, the least of which is doubt.

The human being soon realizes through direct experience or indirect knowledge that all creation is immersed in possibilities, poverty and need, and that the only Provider and One with no needs is Allah.

> ***"Say! Everything is from Allah…" (Holy Qur'an; 4:78)***

One who hopes in one other than Allah for a reward or compensation for any deed is like one who hopes for water from a mirage. Even to the extent of seeking sympathy, a hadith from Imam Ali Zainul 'Abedeen (AS) states:

> *"When you are tried by a slip, do not complain to Allah's creatures, for you would only be complaining of the Merciful to the merciless."*

19.6 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Hujjat Saturday Workshop, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

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Chapter 20: Conceptual Facts about Sinning and Repentance

(Sinning, Repentance, Forgiveness & Punishment)

20.1 Sinning:

A lot of complications occur when we commit a sin. For one, it means that we ignored all the warnings that Allah (S) gave us. It also means that we had no regards for the rules of Allah (S) and had no respect for the Qur'an's, the Prophet's and Imams' teachings. In addition, our sins might lead to corruption in the society in which we live.

The size of the sin does not matter:

> *"Don't look at the size of the sin, look at who you disobeyed"*
>
> *"Don't think of a sin as too little, maybe the wrath of Allah is (hidden) behind it. And don't undervalue a good deed, maybe the contentment of Allah is (hidden) in it"*

Two men came to Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (A.S.) and said that they would like to do Tawbah (ask for forgiveness and rectify) for their sins.
The first man said that he had done lots of small sins whilst the second said that he had committed two big sins.
Imam told the first man to pick one small pebble for each small sin that he had committed.
He told the second man to bring a large boulder for each of his big sins.
After a while both men came back to Imam having brought what they were asked to bring.
Imam now asked both of them to put back every stone in it's place.
The man with the two large boulders found it difficult to carry them back in their original place but eventually he managed.
The man with the many small pebbles could not remember where he had picked all of them so he could not put them all back in their original place.

It is very difficult to do Tawbah for the sins which seem small because we think that they are not important, then we forget about them.

Imam Ali (AS) has said:

> *"The biggest sin is that which the doer considers the smallest."*

20.2 Repentance (Tawbah):

Firstly, it is important to mention that it is better to avoid committing any wrong doing to begin with.

> *"Avoiding sins is better than doing repentance"* *Imam Ali (AS)*

Repentance (Tawbah) means to go back to the right path after deviating from it. It is the best way of sincerely expressing regret for having committed a sin.

Repentance must be done immediately after committing any wrong doing, with a resolution never to do it again.

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20.2.1 Repent in Private:

Repentance should be done in secrecy and privacy. People can establish a direct link to Allah (S) while seeking repentance without the necessity of a third person interfering. In fact, one should not let others know about his/her sins. Prophet Muhammad (S) once told Imam 'Ali (AS):

> *"O 'Ali, blessed is he whom Allah looks upon while he is weeping for the sin that none is aware of except Allah."*

In addition to not revealing his own sins, every person must conceal the faults of his brother or sister in religion to preserve that person's honor in the community. That person's faults may be dealt with personally and privately and must not be spread among others.

20.2.2 Try to Pay for Your Sin:

After repentance one should manage to perform good deeds to make up for his/her sins. Imam Sadiq (AS) said:

> *"If someone did a sin in secret, he/she should do a good deed in secret, and if someone did a sin in public, he/she should do a good deed in public"*

20.2.3 Benefits of Repentance:

Repentance is of benefit now and in the Hereafter. Prophet Muhammad (S) narrated that repenting brings an increase of wealth, protection from danger, and an easing of hardship and difficulties. Furthermore, it has been said that the fastest way to attain nearness to Allah is to humble oneself before Allah and admit wrongdoing. The benefits of repentance for the next life are obvious - entrance into Paradise and safety from the Hellfire, Insha'Allah.

20.2.4 Repent As Soon As Possible:

Repentance will be accepted up until the moment of death. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) once said that if a person seeks repentance one year before dying, Allah will accept it. Even if a person seeks repentance one day before dying, Allah will accept it. Then he pointed to his throat and said that even if someone seeks repentance before his soul reaches here, Allah will accept it.

Nonetheless, repentance should be done as soon as possible and should not be delayed; this point has been emphasized again and again in the Islamic tradition. Imam 'Ali (AS) says: *"How numerous are the procrastinators who postpone [repenting and doing good deeds] until death overtakes them!"*

So, one must do repentance for his sins before seeing the signs of death. For instance, Firaun's repentance was not accepted because he did it when he saw that his life is about to end.

20.2.5 Rules of Repentance According to Imam Ali (AS):

A person came to Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) and said, "*Astaghfirullah*, I seek Allah's forgiveness," and the Imam (peace be upon him) replied: Do you know what asking Allah's forgiveness is? It is a word that stands on six supports.

1. The first is to repent over the past.
2. The second is to make a firm determination never to revert to it.

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3. The third is to discharge all the rights of people so that you may meet Allah quite clean with nothing to account for.
4. The fourth is to fulfill every obligation which you ignored in the past so that you may now be just with it.
5. The fifth is to aim at the flesh grown as a result of unlawful earning so that you may melt it by grief of repentance till the skin touches the bone and a new flesh grows between them.
6. The sixth is to make the body taste the pain of obedience as you previously made it taste the sweetness of disobedience.

On such an occasion, you may say, "I seek Allah's forgiveness."

20.3 Forgiveness:

Among Allah's beautiful names: **The Forgiving**. (***Al-Ghaffar***) (***A-Tawwab***)

> ***"Tell My servants that I am the Forgiving, the Merciful" (Holy Qur'an; 15:49)***
>
> ***"Will they not turn to Allah and ask His forgiveness? Allah is the Forgiving, the Merciful" (Holy Qur'an; 5:74)***

No matter how grievous a person's sin may be, the forgiveness of Allah (S) is greater, and no one should be ashamed to turn toward Allah in repentance because Allah can erase the sins of whomever He pleases.

> ***"Say! O My devotees who have been extravagant (committed sins) on their nafs, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; Indeed Allah shall forgive all the sins; Surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (Holy Qur'an; 39:53)***

20.4 Punishment:

After a person repents, Allah (S) might not simply grant him forgiveness without any punishment in this world. We must know that Allah (S) is **just** and the **Justice** of Allah takes effect, even before His Mercy.

For disbelievers who commit sins, and never care to repent, Allah (S) might spare them any punishment in this world, only to be punished severely in the Hereafter.

For the believers, who repent for a sin, Allah (S) might grant them forgiveness. But, this forgiveness might be accompanied with a punishment in this world, in the form of hardship or difficulties. Allah (S) then might spare them from the much greater chastisement in the Hereafter.

However, we, believers, should be careful because the punishment in this world might also be severe. We might pay a heavy price with our time, wealth, comfort and social status. For instance, if one cheats a person of $5, the punishment might become $100,000 later on in life. We don't know how important this $5 was to that person. One word of backbiting might be followed by months of agony for the person who commits it. The punishment for a sin could be accompanied with loss of time, money, comfort and social status which reduce the chance in pursuing good deeds. On the contrary, it might lead us to collect more bad deeds. For instance, it might take someone years to fix his reputation in his community after doing something wrong in public.

20.5 Conclusion:

When we commit sins, we are taking big risks. When we repent, Allah might forgive us but might also punish us in this world for what we did. We should be careful; the punishment might be severe.

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So, it is our choice, to be careful with the rules of Allah, then we spare ourselves from either punishment (in this world and in the Hereafter); or be careless with the rules of Allah (S) and suffer the consequences.

Let's not play with fire. We don't know what is hidden behind a sin, even if it is a small one. We don't know how bad this sin is in the eyes of Allah (S). And we don't know if we would die abruptly before getting the chance to repent for that sin.

Try to think these questions over:

Is it worth it to sin?
Is it worth it, for a little worldly gain, to offend Allah (S)?

20.6 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following book: **Discovering Islam by: Sayed Moustafa Al-Qazwini,**

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: ***The Shia Ithna'asheri Madressa*, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

Some material in this lesson was taken from the curriculum of: **Hujjat Saturday Workshop, Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, UK**

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Chapter 21: Meaning of Tawheed

Tawheed (Oness of God and sometimes referred to as Monotheism) as taught by Ahlul-Bayt (AS) revolves around the fundamental belief in the absolute Unity and Perfection of Allah the Exalted.

- A perfection that is without the least imaginable deficiency.
- A unity so absolute that He the Magnificent Creator has no partner or associate.
- His attributes are far above any attributes that he has bestowed on His creation.
- He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like Him.
- He is the Originator of all causes and effects with no effect on Him.
- He is One, Everliving, Omniscient (having infinite awareness), Beneficent and Merciful.

Tawheed according to the school of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) does not stop at that, but goes on to say that:

- The Almighty has no shape or form like anything imaginable
- Nor is He confined to a particular place or time
- No entity in His Universe can ever comprehend His true state and none should even bother to try for it will lead to futility and insanity

Yet there is no doubt in any sane mind that His existence precedes all and His presence is absolutely ubiquitous (ever-present).

Imam Ali (AS) said:

> *"Tawheed means that you don't subject Him to the limitation of your imagination"*
>
> *"Recognize Allah through Allah Himself, …"*

A person asked Imam Rida (AS): As to what is the least necessary knowledge (of Allah)?

He replied:

> *"It is the acknowledgement that there is no God other than He. Nothing resembles Him, and He is peerless. He is Eternal and Established … "*

An individual asked Imam Baqir (AS): Inform me about Allah. Since when has He been in Existence?

The Imam replied:

> *"(Tell me) when did Allah not Exist, so that, I may tell you since when He has been in existence. Glorified is He who has existed eternally and who will exist eternally, The One and Unique, The Eternal, The Absolute. Never has He taken to Himself either a consort or a son"*

Imam Baqir (AS) also said:

> *"Beware of pondering over the entity of Allah. If you want, ponder over the loftiness of Allah, then look at His great and wonderful creation"*
>
> *"Talk about everything, but never talk about the entity of Allah"*

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Imam Ali (AS) was asked: **where** was our Lord before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth?

Imam Ali (AS) replied:

> *"The 'where' applies to space. But Allah has been there since there was no 'space' "*

He was also asked: O Commander of the Faithful, while worshipping our Lord do you see Him?

He replied:

> *"Woe unto you, I am not the one to worship a Lord whom I don't see"*

How do you see Him? He was asked,

> *"Woe unto you! Eyes perceive Him not with the faculty of sight, but hearts see Him through the realities of belief".*

21.1 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following book: **Ahlul-Bayt, The Prophet's Household, Presented by Al-Balagh Foundation**

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Chapter 22: Tawheed Using Logic

So far we studied knowing Allah the inner way through our nature (Fitra), instincts and heart and the outer way using evidence from nature and our surroundings. We also studied the true meaning of Tawheed according to Ahlul-Bayt (AS).

At this point, we are comfortable to say that anyone who says that God does not exist is a liar or a fool because such a person can NEVER disprove His existence, whether scientifically, philosophically, or for that matter in any method known.

Now, we want to look at Tawheed (the Oness of Allah) through logical deduction. It is important to address Tawheed in this way since we are living in a diverse society with many different religions and beliefs. We might be challenged, as Muslims, with questions and discussions on the subject of Tawheed. We should have ready answers that are logical and convincing to ourselves as well as others. Some of the questions and challenges we might face are the following:

- What is wrong with believing in more than one god?
- Why can't there be two or many gods?

Let's turn to Imam Ali (AS) to see what He said regarding these questions. He was once talking to His son Imam Hassan (AS). He said

> *"Know truly my son, if there had been another God, you would have received his messengers"*

Based on this Hadith, Let's build our logic about Tawheed in the form of questions.

- If there were more than one god, how come we hear from only one?
- Wouldn't have we heard from the other gods too?
- How come only one god, Allah (S), send messengers?
- Are the other gods incapable of sending messengers? Too weak to send messengers? Or do not care to send messengers?
- How come all the messengers, that were sent to humanity, agree with one another? And confirm one another's message?

In answering these questions, first we can say with certainty that humanity never heard from different gods other than Allah (S). Second, all the messengers agree with one another that they were all sent by the same god, Allah (S). This leads us to reach one logical conclusion, that there is only one god, Allah (S), who sent the messengers to guide humanity to the righteous path.

The Qur'an tells us:

> ***"Had there been other gods besides Allah, both (the Heavens and the Earth) would have been disordered. So glory be to Allah, the Lord of the Throne, free from what they ascribe to Him" (Holy Qur'an; 21:22)***

And in another verse:

> ***"Allah has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god with him. Otherwise each god certainly would have taken off with his creation, and some of the gods would have gained superiority over the others. Glory be to Allah who is far above what they allege" (Holy Qur'an; 23:91-92)***

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Also, here let's use these verses and try to put our logical thinking in the form of questions.

- If there were two or many gods, wouldn't have they fought? Since each one of them wants to run the universe his own way.
- Doesn't each god want to have full control over his own creation, without any interference from the other gods?
- If each god acts independently in this universe, what would happen?
- How come all the creation in the universe coexists in a great harmony?
- Assume there were many gods. How could they all live in harmony and full agreement with one another in this universe? What does that tell us?

Again, these questions lead to some logical conclusions. If there had been more than one god, one of these events would have taken place:

- The gods would have fought till one prevailed and gained superiority over all the others. Consequently, that would have led to only one almighty God. Anyway, that event did not take place since Allah (S) did not tell us about it.

- Each god would have left with his creation and would have had no relationship with the other gods and their creations. Then again, in this case, our universe would belong totally to only one God, Allah (S). However, we don't have any evidence that other gods had left with their creation and Allah (S) did not tell us anything about that. Thus, that event did not occur and we don't have any right to claim that it did.

- Each god would have acted independently from the other gods and would have tried to run the universe his own way. According to the Qur'an, and according to logic that would have created lots of chaos and disorder in the universe. As a matter of fact the universe would have been in total ruin. But, we see no signs of chaos or disorder. So, our conclusion should be that only one god, Allah (S), must be running this universe.

- All the gods are living in harmony and full agreement with one another on every matter and on every decision. In that case how would we, humans, have the ability to distinguish between these gods? Especially when none of them told us about their names, and attributes, except for one. Thus, there is one logical conclusion we can deduce. Since the universe is existing in great peace and harmony without any conflicts, all these gods, that others talk about are really one single almighty God (Allah (S)), the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe.

Luqman (AS) said to his son, admonishing him:

> ***"O my son, do not associate others with God; to associate others with God is a great injustice. " (Holy Qur'an; 31:13)***

Finally, we can say:

- **It is either one God or chaos.**

- **All indications, all evidence, all intelligence and all logic point toward the great expression: GOD IS ONE.**

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Chapter 23: Divine Justice ('*ADL*)

The second foundation of Islam after **Tawheed** is the belief in the **Justice** of Almighty Allah (S). Because Allah (S) is just, He never wrongs His creatures, for injustice is an evil deed while He is far from doing evil.

> ***"He is always standing firm on justice. There is no God but Him, the Mighty, the Wise." (Holy Qur'an; 3:18)***
>
> ***"And your Lord does not deal unjustly with anyone." (Holy Qur'an; 18:49)***

23.1 How do we understand the Justice of Allah (SWT)?

- Because Allah (S) is omniscient (having infinite awareness, understanding and insight), He does not neglect anything. (Injustice could come from negligence or ignorance)

  "And with Him are the keys of the unseen. None but He knows them. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf falls but He knows it, not a grain amid the darkness of the earth, moist or dry but (is noted) in a clear record" (Holy Qur'an; 6:59)

- Because He is self-sufficient, He has no cause to wrong others. (Injustice could come from inability and lack of power)
- Since He owns everything, He does not need the actions of anyone.
- Since He dislikes evil, He treats His creature with fairness.
- Since He is fair, He does not compel His servants to do things outside their capabilities.
- His wisdom transcends the universe.

As a summary, we can say that injustice comes from a deficiency of some sort (need, negligence, ignorance, weakness, disorganization, lack of wisdom, love of evil). Thus, since Allah (S) does not have any of these deficiencies, unlike human beings, He has no cause for injustice.

23.2 Importance of Justice:

Justice is so important that it was chosen from among all the attributes of Allah to be the 2nd foundation of Islam. For one reason, it creates a healthy medium where people can function and interact in this world with the assurance that justice will be served in this world or at least in the Hereafter. Without justice, there is total confusion among people, because one wouldn't know the consequences of good and evil actions.

So, knowing that the Justice of Allah (S) takes or will take effect in every matter and dispute, and for every action a person takes; and the fact that Allah (S) rewards for good deeds and punishes for bad deeds, assures the believer the satisfaction that their rights are preserved, if not in this life, surely in the Hereafter.

23.3 How & where do we see the Justice of Allah (S)?

Allah's justice encompasses the entire universe. Whoever ponders over the existence of the universe and the order therein will observe the spread of Allah's justice over His entire creation, down to the tiniest detail.

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The justice of Allah is particularly visible in the fate and destiny of human beings, and in their free will and freedom of choice.

Allah's Justice is apparent in everything, even in His punishment. We notice that Allah (S) does not hold people responsible for their sins till after He sends them guidance and warnings to help them avoid sinning.

"We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves." (Holy Qur'an; 16:118)

We see the justice of Allah (S) visible in:

- The abundance of resources to satisfy the needs of His servants.
- Sending guidance, warnings and reminders to His servants.
- Promising the oppressed that they will gain their rights in this world and/or in the Hereafter.
- The fact that every person is responsible **only** for his/her own deeds.
- The promise that

"Deal not unjustly and you shall not be dealt with unjustly" (Holy Qur'an; 2:279)

23.4 Where is the justice of Allah (S) when Disasters Strikes?

In this world, we see that natural disasters and calamities like earthquakes and weather storms can happen at any time and without any warnings. But if we think about it, we can see that the justice of Allah (S) is in fact served in these disasters. For one reason, if disasters and calamities did not occur, people would tend to indulge in the pleasures of this world, forget about the Hereafter, fall in the trap of Satan, commit sin and finally perhaps go to hell fire. So, the fact that disasters can happen at any time creates the element of fear, uncertainty and insecurity in people's mind which works as a justly reminder that this life in not permanent, death could come at any moment and the Hereafter is the permanent abode. Another reason is that if the people who died in the disaster were good practicing believers they would be counted as martyrs and would all go to Heaven.

23.5 Emulate Allah's Justice:

Just as Allah encourages human beings to emulate some of His attributes, such as being patient and forgiving, He also tells us to follow the way of justice. ***"Say: My Lord has enjoined upon me justice" 7:29.*** Although common people may falter in this area, none of the prophets of Allah or their successors ever committed any act of injustice.

23.6 Justice & Mercy:

Although Allah's justice encompasses everything, people should pray to Allah to treat them not with His justice but rather with His mercy. If Allah (S) had chosen to treat His people solely with His justice and punish them immediately for their sins, humanity would have perished a long time ago.

23.7 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following book: **Ahlul-Bayt, The Prophet's Household, Presented by Al-Balagh Foundation**

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Chapter 24: Prophethood and Imamat

The first type of guidance that Allah (S) has bestowed on humanity is the good instinctive nature or “Fitra”. This Fitra is a knowledge that helps the person to have a good nature, avoiding major sins and interacting with fellow humans in a civilized and respectful manner. For example, every person, by nature, knows that killing and stealing are acts which should not be done.

A second type of guidance became essential since relying on Fitra alone was not enough to lead humanity to an acceptable life and success in the Hereafter, “salvation”. People needed something superior to their limited knowledge and good nature. That’s why Allah (S) provided another type of guidance to humanity, through Heavenly revelation. That is Prophethood.

Prophets appear in time of social chaos and disorder in order to establish a perfect human order. Prophets initial invitation is precisely toward Tawheed, which is the principal element of guidance. Then, they try to start a social resurrection where they begin replacing falsehood with “**truth**”, erasing ignorance, prejudice and evil, and leading people to the righteous path.

24.1 Facts about Prophets, Messengers, and Imams:

The Prophets and Messengers were the people appointed by Allah (S), who received divine revelation. Allah has sent many **Prophets** to humankind since the dawn of history (124,000 Prophets). Among these prophets there were 313 **Messengers**. Two of these messengers had the title of **Imam**, namely, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Muhammad (S).

Allah attributes the right of appointing the Prophets, Messengers and Imams to Himself:

> ***"We made from among them leaders, giving guidance under Our command."***
> ***(Holy Qur’an; 32:24)***

It has been the tradition throughout history that, all of the Prophets, Messengers and Imams had successors, and just as Allah appointed His prophets and messengers for the guidance of mankind, He also appointed their successors to follow through with the message. For instance, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was succeeded by two of his sons, Prophets Isaac and Isma’il (AS); and Jesus (AS) was succeeding by two prophets whom the Qur'an mentions in chapter "*Ya Sin*". (36:13-14). Likewise, Prophet Muhammad (S) was succeeded by twelve distinguished successors, one after the other. These successors were ***imams*** and were appointed by Allah (S), not by people.

1. **A Prophet (Nabi)** is a person who receives divine revelation from Allah (S) to command a group of people toward a way of life to the satisfaction of Allah (S). The prophet may also be informed of other things like events that happened in the past and events that will happen in the future.

2. A Messenger (Rasul) is a Prophet who receives a Divine Book or some form of scriptures from Allah (S), which contain new divine law, beliefs and new practical rules that people must follow.

The messengers were of two types: "local" and "universal." While the local ones were sent with specific messages to specific groups of people, the universal ones were sent with messages and books for all of humankind. There were only five universal prophets: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon them).

Note that the degree of messenger-ship is higher than the degree of prophethood. So every Rasul is Nabi, while the reverse is not always true. Also every Nabi whom Qur’an has mentioned along with a community (Umma), is consequently a Rasul.

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Since he has to convince his people to accept a NEW religion with new practices, a Rasul's work is much harder than that of a Nabi. Surely a Nabi invites people toward Allah (S); however, he does not set any new practices for the people. The people that he invites to Allah (S) would be ordered to follow the custom and practices of a previous Rasul.

3. **An Imam** means a person who is appointed by God as a leader and as a guide (see Qur'an 21:73 and 32:24) to whom obedience is due, and whom people should follow.

"Messengers are Warners and Imams are Guides" (Holy Qur'an; 13:7)

24.2 The School of Ahlul-bayt's Position:

The school of Ahlul-bayt believes that the rank of Imamat is higher than that of prophethood and messenger-ship. Among all the prophets and messengers, only Prophet **Muhammad** (S), Prophet **Ibrahim** (AS) received the title of Imamat. The school of Ahlul-bayt also believes that the twelve Imams of the House of Prophet Muhammad have the rank higher than that of ALL the messengers and prophets except Prophet Muhammad (S).Prophet Muhammad (S) has the highest rank among all humanity, and is the most virtuous and the most honored human to Allah (S).

The 12 Imams, starting with Imam Ali (AS) did not receive divine revelation about Sharia (divine law). They did not receive any commands concerning new religious practices, and so on. So, Allah revealed Qur'an as well as the Shari'ah (Divine law) ONLY to the Prophet (S), and none of these things were revealed to Imam Ali (AS).

Muslims, including Sunnis, have narrated in their authentic books that when Imam Mahdi (AS) comes, Prophet Jesus (AS) will descend and will pray behind him. This clearly shows that the rank of Imam Mahdi (AS) is higher than that of Prophet Jesus who was one of the five greatest messengers of Allah.

24.3 Infallibility:

A unique characteristic of all the prophets, messengers and Imams is that they were infallible - that is, they never committed any sin. The easiest way to see this is to consider that these people were the examples sent for humanity to follow, and so if they committed errors, people would be obliged to follow their errors. Thereby, this would make the prophets and messengers unreliable.

Infallibility means protection, and, in Islamic terminology, means the spiritual grace of Allah enabling a person to abstain from sins by his own free will. This power of infallibility does not make a person incapable of committing sins; rather, he refrains from sins and mistakes by his own power and will.

In order to make the concept of infallibility clear, let's take an example. Assume that a person approached you and offered you a drink of alcohol. In response, right away and without any hesitation you refuse his offer. You didn't have to think about it at all. Why? The reason is that you have been a good Muslim working hard on disciplining yourself to avoid the Haraam. You understand what alcohol does to one's mind and you know where Islam stands regarding the big sin of drinking alcohol. You succeeded in building a strong barrier between yourself and this big sin. So, it was really easy for you to overcome the temptations and turn down the offer. So, as far as alcohol is concerned, Allah (S) made you infallible, with the fact that, you are the one who made the decision not to drink alcohol. In the same way, a prophet would spend years and years, days and nights working hard on disciplining himself, watching his own behavior, making the right decisions, avoiding all kinds of Haraam conducts, never hurting or offending anyone and dedicating long hours to worshiping Allah. Finally, when Allah (S) sees his sincerity, He chooses him as a prophet and provides him with the protection of infallibility. But still, the fact remains that the prophet refrains from sins and mistakes by his own power and will.

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24.4 The Importance of Imamat in the Qur'an:

"Imams are the Stars of Guidance" (Holy Qur'an; 6:97)

The story of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) in the Qur'an explains about the three different titles of Prophethood, messenger-ship and imamat. First, Ibrahim (AS) became a servant of Allah ('Abd), then he became Prophet (Nabi), then he became Messenger (Rasul), then he became a Confident (Khalil), and then he finally became (Imam) which is the highest title.

"And when Ibrahim was tested by his Lord with certain commands which he fulfilled. Then He said: Lo! I appoint you an Imam for mankind." (Holy Qur'an; 2:124)

As we can see, Prophet Ibrahim was tested by Allah during his prophethood, and when he successfully passed the tests (which were the test on his life, leaving his wife and sacrificing his son), he was granted the position of Imamat. This shows position of Imamat is higher in degree than prophethood.

24.5 How Does The Nabi, Rasul and Imam Communicate with Allah (S):

The communication with Allah (S) happens through revelation (WAHY) in one of three ways: it may be direct (example: Prophet Musa (AS)), through an intermediary like an angel (example: Prophet Muhammad (AS)), or through a dream (example: Prophet Ibrahim (AS)).

Another way of communication with Allah (S) is by inspiration (ILHAM). By inspiration, Allah induces the knowledge into the heart of His servant. Nabi, Rasul, Imam and even ordinary people could get inspired by Allah (S)

Imam Ali and the rest of the Imams were inspired (ILHAM) is not about religious commandments; but rather about what happened and what will happen.

Another difference between Rasul and Nabi and Imam is how they communicate with the angels. It is mentioned in Usul Kafi

- Rasul sees and hears the angel while awake or asleep.
- Nabi hears the angel and sees him while asleep, but does not see him while awake though hears the speech.
- Imam is the one who hears the angel while awake while does not see him while awake or asleep.

There is no shadow of doubt that Imam Ali (AS) was "Muhaddath" which means "a person who has been spoken to". Not only him but also all the twelve Imams, as well as Lady Fatima (AS) were Muhaddath/Muhaddathah.

In the Qur'an it is mentioned that Mary (AS) had communication with angels. According to all Muslims, Fatima (AS) was the best woman in this world and in the Hereafter, then, she could, as well, communicate with the angels.

24.6 The Appointment of Imam Ali (a) as Prophet Muhammad's Successor:

During his lifetime, Prophet Muhammad (S) specifically mentioned the names of the leaders that would come after him, that there would be twelve of them, and that all of them would be descended from a particular Arab tribe called Quraysh.

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In Ghadir Khum, the following verse of the Qur'an was revealed:

> ***"O Apostle! Deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; and if you don't do it, you have not delivered His message (at all); and Allah will protect you from the people ..." (Holy Qur'an; 5:67)***

Upon receiving the verse, the Prophet (S) gathered all the Muslims under the extremely hot sun. Then, the Prophet declared Imam Ali as His successor. Then, this verse was revealed:

> ***"Today I have completed your religion and my bounty upon you, and I was satisfied that Islam be your religion." (Holy Qur'an; 5:3)***

The above verse clearly indicates that the message of Islam wouldn't be complete until the Prophet (S) announced to the Muslims that Imam Ali (AS) is His immediate successor.

Some of Sunni references which mentioned the revelation of the above verse of Qur'an in Ghadir Khum after the speech of the Prophet. References:

(1) al-Durr al-Manthur, by al-Hafiz Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, v3, p19 (2) Tarikh, by Khatib al-Baghdadi, v8, pp 290,596 from Abu Hurayra (3) Manaqaib, by Ibn Maghazali, p19 (4) History of Damascus, Ibn Asakir, v2, p75 (5) al-Itqan, by al-Suyuti, v1, p13 (6) Manaqib, by Khawarazmi al-Hanfi, p80 (7) al-Bidayah wal-Nihayah, by Ibn Kathir, v3, p213 (8) Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, by al-Qudoozi al-Hanafi, p115 (9) Nuzul al-Qur'an, by al-Hafiz Abu Nu'aym narrated on the authority Abu Sa'id Khudri. ... and more.

24.7 Some Sunni References regarding Imam Ali (AS):

24.7.1 Imam Ali (AS) having the highest virtues of the early great Messengers:

Prophet Muhammad (S) said:

> *"Anyone who wants to see Noah (AS) in his determination, Adam (AS) in his knowledge, Ibraheem (AS) in his clemency, Mussa (AS) in his intelligence and Issa (AS) in his religious devotion, should look at Ali Ibn Abi Talib (AS)."*

Sunni references: - Sahih al-Bayhaqi - Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Tafsir al-Kabir, by Fakhruddin al-Razi. This tradition has been accepted by all as genuine.

24.7.2 The Light (Noor) of the Prophet (S) and Ali (AS) preceded the creation of Adam (AS):

Salman al-Farsi (RA) narrated that: I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying:

> *"I, and Ali were one light in the hands of Allah fourteen thousand years (14,000) before He created Adam (AS). When Allah created Adam (AS) He divided that light into two parts, one part is me and one part Ali."*

Sunni References: - Mizan Al-Ei'tidal, by al-Dhahabi, v1, p235 - Fada'il al-Sahaba, by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v2, p663, Tradition #1130 - al-Riyadh al-Nadhirah, by al-Muhib al-Tabari, v2, p164, v3, p154 - History of Ibn Asakir. This clearly shows that the ranks of Prophet Muhammad (S) and Imam Ali (AS) are better than any human being ever created by Allah.

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24.7.3 No one crosses the Path except by a pass from Ali (AS):

Anas Ibn Malik narrated: "When Abu Bakr neared death,..., Abu Bakr said that he heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying:

> *"That there is an obstacle on the Path which no one crosses unless with a pass (permission) from Ali Ibn Abi Talib (AS)"*

Sunni references: - Tarikh, by al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi, v10, p356 - al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 9, subheading 2, p195.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

> *"When Allah gathers the first-ones and the last-ones on the Day of Judgment, and the Path has been erected on the bridge of Hell, no one can cross it unless he has along proof of allegiance (Wilaya) to Ali Ibn Abi Talib.*

" Sunni reference: al-Riyadh al-Nadhirah, by Muhibbuddin al-Tabari, v2, p172

24.7.4 Ali (AS) is the divider of People between Paradise and Hell:

The Prophet (S) said to Ali (AS):

> *"You are the divider of Paradise and Hell on the Day of Judgment, you say to Hell: This one is for me and that one for you."*

Sunni reference: al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 9, subheading 2, p195.

- What Umar Ibn al-Khattab said about Imam Ali (AS):

> "If all the seven planets, and the all the seven heavens are put in one scale of balance and the faith of Ali in the other, Ali's pan will turn the scales."

Sunni References: - al-Riyadh al-Nadhirah, by Muhibbuddin al-Tabari - Izalat al-Khifa Maqsad

24.7.5 Ali (AS) the best of people after Prophet Muhammad (S):

"...Jabir said: The messenger of Allah (S) said:

> *"Ali is the best of humanity (after me), so whoever has doubt is a Kafir."*

Sunni references: - Kinooz Al-Haqa'iq, by Abdul Raouf al-Manawi, p92 - Tarikh, by al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi, v7, p421.

24.8 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following Web site: **www.al-islam.org**

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Chapter 25: The Qur'an

"We descended this Book to you to make plain the reality of all things and to be a source of guidance, mercy and glad tidings for the Muslims" (Holy Qur'an; 16:89)

25.1 The Mission of the Qur'an is to:

- Plant the seeds of Tawheed in the hearts and minds of people; and free their thinking and liberate them from sticking to the ancient traditions of polytheism.
- Always be the source of spiritual guidance and command in the face of changing events of time.
- Convey to people the glad tidings and the warnings; and always be there as a reminder about the Day of Judgment.
- Provide people with explicit and firm laws, so they can interact peacefully and build healthy societies.
- Urge people to eagerly seek good deeds and stay away from any wrong doing.
- Tell people the stories of the nations before them, so they learn lessons.
- Negate all forms of purposelessness in the human being's existence and condemn superficiality and shortsightedness and bring people to reality.
- Increase the volume of human knowledge and open up new horizons.

25.2 The Language of the Qur'an:

The Qur'an was revealed in the Arabic language, one of the richest languages in regards to its firmness of structure and its abundance in vocabulary.

The words of the Qur'an are harmonious and in complete accord with a subtle meaning.

The Qur'an is neither poetry nor prose, but more eloquent than both.

Arabic language experts admit that the words of the Qur'an are situated on a higher place than the speech of humans. As a matter of fact, the Hadith, speeches and supplications (Du'a) of our Prophet (S) and Imams (AS) are above the speech of humans, and the words of the Qur'an are higher than both.

25.3 How does the Qur'an Address People?

- ❖ Once it addresses the minds and the intellect of people using clear and convincing logic.

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- ❖ Another time, it tries to soften the hearts of the listeners, which, in many cases, is more effective than logic.
- ❖ It addresses people's wisdom and reasoning instincts urging them to reason with the facts and the evidence around them.
- ❖ It calls on the people to use their eyes and ears to perceive the truth.
- ❖ It illustratively describes, with astonishing details, the Paradise (Al-Janna) and its bounties, gently enticing people to stay on the righteous path so that they enter it.
- ❖ It illustratively describes, with terrifying details, Hell (A-Naar) and its unbearable chastisements, as a reminder for people to avoid going astray.

25.4 The Power of the Verses:

> ***"If We had caused this Qur'an to descend upon a mountain, you had seen it humbled, broken from the fear of Allah" (Holy Qur'an; 59:21)***

The Qur'an has the power to attract people to listen to it. Upon hearing the verses, the people with clean hearts, right away, realize that it is the truth.

Many polytheists did not permit themselves to listen to the Qur'an because it has astonishing influence that might conquer their hearts.

But at the same time, they could not help it. Ibn Hisham narrates: "it was so strange that some of the unbelievers of Quraysh would secretly go near the Prophet's house at night, remaining there till dawn, to listen to the recitation of the Qur'an by the Prophet."

25.5 The Sweetness and Gentleness of the Qur'an:

- **The words of the Qur'an softly enter the heart, have a sweet and beautiful melody and are pleasing to the ear**
- **The Qur'an gently addresses all levels of intellect without offending anyone**
- **Reading or listening to the Qur'an is never boring, even after many repetitions**

25.6 The Learning Renaissance:

Prophet Muhammad (S) arose in an environment where there was no trace of learning or civilization. In the whole Medina, there were only 11 people who knew how to read and write, and in Mecca no more than 17 people were literate. Then, the Qur'an descended like a flash of lightning in that darkness of the Age of ignorance. Prophet Muhammad (S), with the Qur'an, introduced his people to the world of learning and writing and laid the foundations of a movement that transformed the degenerate society of Arabia into the nucleus of a great world civilization with great scholars and scientific accomplishments.

The Qur'an possesses a remarkable comprehensiveness and richness with respect to its ability to guide the individual and society.

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The Qur'an made learning and sciences flourish and spread, and yet, there are still many matters contained in the Qur'an waiting to be discovered.

25.7 The Qur'an Presented a Challenge:

The Qur'an issued a challenge in three stages. First, it challenged the disbelievers to produce a document like it:

> ***"Were all of mankind to come together and wish to produce the like of the Qur'an, they would never succeed, however much they aided each other" (Holy Qur'an; 17:88)***

It then modified the challenge and reduced its scope:

> ***"Do people imagine that this Qur'an is not from Us, and that you, Oh Prophet, are falsely attributing it to us? Tell them if they are speaking truly, they should produce ten surahs resembling the Qur'an, and that they are free to call on the aid of anyone but God in so doing " (Holy Qur'an; 11:13)***

Then, at third stage, the scope of the challenge is reduced still further:

> ***"Oh people if you doubt the heavenly origin of this Book which We have sent down to Our servant, the Prophet, produce one surah like it" (Holy Qur'an; 2:23)***

Some unbelievers also tried desperately but were unable to point even a single error in the Qur'an (grammatical or otherwise).

25.8 The Authenticity of the Qur'an:

Allah (S) promised that He will protect the Qur'an from any alteration.

> ***"We revealed the reminder and We verily are its Guardian" (Holy Qur'an; 15:9)***

The Qur'an is still entirely the same as it descended on the Prophet (S). This is an important blessing from Allah (S) for the Muslims and a source of strength and happiness for them that their Holy Book was never altered.

25.9 The Miracle:

Prophets always were asked to perform miracles in order to prove the authenticity of their prophethoods. Often, the miracle has to do with the trend of the age. The Prophet performs a great miracle to show the people that their power and skills are no match to Allah's. For instance, during Prophet Musa's time, performing magic was the powerful profession that fascinated people. The Pharaoh and his magicians used to deceive people with magic acts. Allah (S) sent Prophet Musa (AS) with a great miracle that nullified their magic and destroyed all their tricks. During Prophet Issa's time, preparing medications, from herbs, to cure illnesses was the vital profession. Often, those professionals used to cheat people by falsely claiming that their medications would cure certain illnesses. Allah (S) at the hands of Prophet Issa (AS) cured the blind and the crippled and revived the dead.

In Arabia, poetry and eloquent speech was the social trend. The Qur'an came at the hand s of the illiterate Prophet as a miracle to show the people that the eloquence they are proud of does not stand a chance in front of the words of Allah.

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"Before this, you did not read any book, nor did you write anything with your hands" (Holy Qur'an; 29:84)

In addition, the miracles of the previous Prophets became absent when they died. They only addressed the people of their time. Since Islam is the last and final message, its miracle has to be present at all ages. So, the Qur'an, as it offered convincing proof to people in the past, it has to do the same for all future generations.

The Qur'an remains the miraculous Book that has no errors, has no contradictions, can't be imitated and never becomes outdated; The Book that provides firm laws for building a healthy human society.

25.10 The Multi-dimensions and Depth of the Qur'an:

- One of the clear characteristic of the Qur'an is that by means of a finite verbal form, it expresses many meanings.
- With the same words, the Qur'an addresses people of all levels of intellect with great respect and according to their intellectual capacities. Taking the whole spectrum of people, from the illiterate to the great scholar, when they hear the verses of the Qur'an, everyone gets a good understanding and everyone gets satisfied.

Imam Ali (AS) said:

"the Qur'an is a burning torch, the light of which is never extinguished; it is a deep ocean, the depth of which will never be penetrated by the human thought."

Only the infallibles know the real potential of the Qur'an, its depth and its dimensions.

25.11 The Interpretation of the Qur'an:

"None knows Its interpretation except Allah and those who are deeply rooted in knowledge" (Holy Qur'an; 3:7)

The deeply rooted in knowledge are the Prophet (S) and the Imams (AS).

Scholars study the Islamic history with all its important personalities and events. They thoroughly study the Hadith and tradition of the Prophet (S) and Imams (AS). They extensively study the Arabic language with its various subjects. Only then, an outstanding scholar would attempt to interpret the verses of the Qur'an.

For the rest of the people, they are encouraged to read the Qur'an and ponder the meaning of its verses. However, They must stay away from trying to interpret the verses which carry various meanings. They might draw the wrong interpretation and conclusions and mislead themselves and others.

25.12 The Uniformity of the Qur'an:

Considering the fact that the Qur'an was revealed over a period of 23 years, it is important to note that this gradualness did not cause the verses to lose their harmony and inner unity.

The Prophet (S) at one time belonged to a deprived minority; at another time, a lot of wealth was at his disposal. At one time His isolation and the social boycott imposed on Him were of an intensity sufficient to defeat anyone; at another time, He was counted the leader of the strongest nation of the time. Sometimes, he was confronted by the crisis of war; at other times, He lived in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility. If

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the Qur'an were the work of Muhammad it would not have had its uniformity, and these changing conditions of life would have had an effect on the Prophet's thinking and attitude.

We notice that the Qur'an has no change in tone, no discrepancy and no contradictions with respect to style and content.

> ***"Do they not reflect on the Qur'an? and if It were from other than Allah, they would certainly find much variation and contradiction in it" (Holy Qur'an; 4:81)***

25.13 Do Read the Qur'an:

Prophet Muhammad (S) urged His people to read, study and recite the Qur'an and ponder upon its verses and benefit from them. On the Day of Judgment, the Prophet (S) will complain to Allah (S) about His people, that they deserted the Qur'an.

> ***"And the messenger says: O my Lord my people deserted this Qur'an"***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 25:30)***

When hardship strikes the believers, The Qur'an is their best refuge. The Qur'an has a soothing and calming effect.

Also, remember this Hadith:

> *"… If you want Allah (S) to talk to you, read in The Qur'an"*

25.14 Credits & References:

Parts of this article were taken from ... some parts were used exactly and some were edited to fit an academic format suitable for this youth teaching material.

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Chapter 26: Events During and After Death

To the ignorant, death means the end of life; while for the good believer it is the beginning of a happy eternal life.

26.1 There is no Escape from Death for Anyone:

The Holy Qur'an declares:

> ***"Wheresoever you will be, death will overtake you, even if you are in (strong and) lofty towers" (Holy Qur'an; 4:78)***
>
> ***"Every one on it will perish. But will remain for ever the Face of the Lord, the Glorious and Gracious." (Holy Qur'an; 55:26)***
>
> ***"Every soul must taste death, (and we test you by evil and good by way of trial; and to us you shall be brought back)." (Holy Qur'an; 21:35)***

26.2 Events while Dying:

At the approach of death, when the eyes, ears and tongue cease to function, the person concerned sees (in spiritual vision) three things which claim to be friends:

1. One of them says, "I will remain with you till your death." (his worldly wealth and assets).
2. "I will accompany you till the door of your grave." (his children).
3. But one friend says, "I am with you forever, in life as well as death." (These are his deeds of this world).

When time comes for a person to die, Allah sends two angels:

> Mushkiyah - One who makes him generous (with his family wealth).
> Munsiyyah - One who makes him forget (all worldly affairs).

Also two other angels visit the dying person:

> Raqueeb - Comes to deliver the record of good deeds, and,
> Ateed - Comes to deliver the record of bad deeds.

Imam Ali (AS) has said:

> *"Whoever dies, sees me, whether he is a believer or a hypocrite"*

So far as the believers are concerned, they become happy to see the Imam (AS), but the hypocrites become sad when they see him.

When these angels have done their job, the Angel of Death (Malakul Maut, Isra'il) arrives and tells the believer not to worry (especially if he has good record of his deeds):

> *"By Allah, I am kinder to you then your father. Now open your eyes and look."*

Then the dying person's spiritual eyes are opened. Then, he hears the following call (present in the Holy Qur'an);

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"O soul that is at rest! Return to your Lord, well pleased with Him, well-pleasing Him. So enter among my servants and enter into my gardens." ((Holy Qur'an; 89:27-30)

At that time the believer's only wish is to die as soon as possible so that he may reach that caller. Thus, the believer leaves this world without any sorrow and without any care. And Allah gives him death when he himself desires death above all things, so that he may reach the Messenger of Allah.

26.3 Questioning in the Grave:

According to traditions, after one has been buried and those who came to bury him go away (it is said that 40 steps away from the grave is sufficient), two angels come into the grave. One is called Munkar, the other Nakir. The soul is caused to re-enter the body for questioning. Then the person (now alive again) is asked:

"Who is your Rabb (Lord)? Who is your Prophet? What is your Religion? What is your Book? What is your Qiblah? Who are your Imams?

Talqeen prepares the dead person to answer all these questions, since it reminds him of the correct answers to questions which will be asked of him.

Whoever answers the questions correctly gets comfort and mercy in the grave and the garden of bliss in the Hereafter; and whoever does not answer correctly, await the fate of boiling water in his grave and Hell in the next world.

Questioning in the grave includes questions about Salaat, Zakaat, Haj, Fasting and the love for Ahlul-Bayt (AS). If the believer answers correctly, the angels tell him to sleep peacefully, and a door is opened into his grave from paradise; He sees his place in paradise, then his soul is taken out of the body and is placed in the neighborhood of the 14 Ma'sumeen (AS).

After the questioning in the grave by Munkar and Nakir two other angels, Mubashir and Bashir, come to congratulate the believers if they have answered successfully.

Again the love for Imam Ali (AS) helps during the questioning. Our Holy Prophet (S) told Imam Ali (AS):

"Those who love you will be glad in three places:
At the time of death, (Because you will be there visiting them)
At the questioning in the grave (As you will be teaching them the correct replies)
At the time of coming before Allah (and you will be there introducing them)."

If he is not a believer, and does not answer correctly, then the angels punish him and a door is opened from hell into his grave.

After the questioning in the grave, the soul of a believer is sent to Wadius Salaam (the Valley of Peace); and that of an unbeliever to Wadiul Barhut (the Valley of Turmoil/Trouble). The Valley of Peace is said to be in Najaf, where the soul of the believers remain in peace awaiting the Day of Judgment; and the Valley of Trouble is said to be in Yemen, where the souls of the hypocrites and unbelievers remain in turmoil, afraid of the approaching of the Day of Resurrection.

26.4 Squeezing In the Grave:

Imam Ja'far as Sadiq (AS) said:

"Whoever is subject to the questioning in the grave is also squeezed by the grave therein, and the one who is exempted from questioning, is exempted from the squeeze also."

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For some believers the squeeze will be like two friend embracing each other. For some sinful believers, the squeezing will be severe enough to fracture the ribs. For non-believers, the squeezing will be worse.

26.5 Barzakh:

Barzakh literally means "Barrier" referring to the period between Death and the Day of Resurrection (i.e. the day when all human beings will be brought back to life). During Barzakh, one's correct belief and good deeds alone will assist him in having a peaceful time.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (AS) said:

> *"We will intercede (ask for forgiveness) on your behalf on the Day of Judgment, but, by Allah, I am worried about you for the period when you would be in Barzakh"*

Sinners will be punished during this period. The Holy Qur'an confirms the period of Barzakh saying,

> ***"...And before them is a barrier until the day they are raised." (Holy Qur'an; 23:100)***

26.5.1 There are 3 main Groups in Barzakh:

1. The true perfect believers;
2. The confirmed unbelievers and hypocrites;
3. Those who are neither perfect believers nor confirmed unbelievers.

1. The true believers:
This group of people are perfect in their Faith and virtuous in their deeds. They lived a blameless life, and if there was some mistake or sin, their worldly troubles like, illness, poverty, death of near and dear ones, troublesome neighbors, and/or agony at the time of Death were sufficient to be counted as payment for the sins they committed.

Allah knows that they deserve reward; but since the Day of Judgment has not yet come, they cannot be sent to Paradise. By the rule of the law they should be left without any reward till they are resurrected; but by the Mercy of Allah, they are questioned about their beliefs and on giving correct answers, they enter a state of Bliss, which gives them the satisfaction of knowing that their future is secure. They find pleasure and happiness in their grave and wait eagerly for the Day of Resurrection.

2. The confirmed unbelievers and hypocrites:
These are the people whose lives were devoid of good deeds, or if they performed any good deeds, the worldly blessings of health, wealth, good family and friends, prestige and power, and/or ease at the time of death were sufficient rewards.

Allah knows that there place is in Hell; but He does not send them there before the Day of Judgment. So, to give a fore-taste of their punishment, they are questioned about their beliefs, and when they do not give correct answers, their graves are turned into cells of punishment; and they wish that Qiyamah would not come at all.

Note: The reward or punishment of Barzakh is different from that of Paradise or Hell. The reward or punishment of Barzakh is for the Soul only. It is for this reason that we do not see anyone being rewarded or punished in the grave. In the tradition of Ma'sumeen (AS) it has been compared to happy dreams or nightmares.

3. Neither perfect believers nor confirmed disbelievers:
These are the children, the insane, those who for some reason or another could not differentiate the right path from the wrong path, those who were so far out of the Islamic Environment that they were not aware of

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the truth of Islam, those who did not know about Islam but yet were not enemies of Islam, those whose religious beliefs were not based upon logical understanding but just followed what their families were following, those non-believers who love the Holy Prophet (S) and the Ahlul Bayt (AS) without knowing that they were the True Guides sent by Allah (S).

Such people will not be subjected to the questioning and squeezing in the grave. They will be left in a state like deep slumber, and Allah will decide about them on the Day of Judgment. Till then, there is neither reward nor punishment for them.

After these main groups, there still remains a group in between.
This group is of those believers who had committed so many sins that could not be erased by the worldly troubles and agony of death. If Allah decides that such a believer should come on the Day of Judgment clean from all blemishes and free from all sins, then He may put him under punishment during Barzakh. It is this punishment which has been referred to in the Hadith by Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (AS):

> *"We will intercede on your behalf on the Day of Judgment but, by Allah, I am worried about you whilst you would be in Barzakh."*

On the other hand, if Allah decides to leave this case in suspense till Qiyamah, then it will fall under the 3rd group.

All these things depend upon the justice and mercy of Allah. We have not been told enough to know all the details about all the groups. It is about the 1st, 2nd and last group of people who will be punished in Barzakh, that the Holy prophet (S) has said:

> *"When one dies, his Qiyamah starts."*

26.6 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following Web site: **www.playandlearn.org**

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Chapter 27: The Day of Judgment I

(Resurrection)

All human beings will be resurrected to be rewarded or punished according to each individual's earnings of good and bad deeds in their worldly lives. The present life is only a season for planting, and the life after death will be the period of harvest of the result.

27.1 The Two Trumpet Blows:

The sound of the first and second trumpets will be the first stage of the Day of Judgment. Allah has mentioned it in many verses of the Holy Qur'an. An example of such a verse:

> ***" And the Trumpet shall be blown, then shall swoon (die) whoever is in heavens and whoever is in the earth. Then the (Trumpet) shall be blown again and lo! They shall stand up awaiting (they shall wake up again)." (Holy Qur'an; 39:68)***

So, the trumpet will be blown twice. When it will be blown for the first time, people (and every living thing) will die. After it is blown for the second time, everyone will wake up and indeed it will be the Day of Judgment.

Imam Zainul 'Abedeen (AS) was asked, "How much time will pass between the two blowings of the trumpet?" He said, *"As much as Allah would please."*

Then he was asked: "Then please tell me, O Son of the Messenger of Allah, how will the trumpet be blown?"

The Imam (AS) said:

> *"As far as the first blowing is concerned, verily Allah will command angel Israfil, who will come toward the earth, and with him will be a Trumpet; and the Trumpet will have one mouth-piece and two tubes; and the space between the two tubes will be like that between the sky and earth"*
>
> *"When the angels will see Israfil descend toward the earth with his Trumpet, they will say, 'Verily, Allah has ordered the inhabitants of earth to die, and the inhabitants of heaven to die."*
>
> *"Then Israfil will blow the trumpet once; and the voice will come out of that side which is toward the earth and all living beings on the earth will die; and then the voice will come out from the side which is toward the heaven, and all living things in the heavens will die.*
>
> *"Then Allah will say to Israfil : 'O Israfil, die.' And he will die too. And they will remain like this as long as Allah wishes."*

The Imam (AS) continues:

> *"Then Allah will create a loud voice which will be heard throughout the earth and the heaven : "Whose is the Kingdom this day ?". No one will give any answer (as there will be none alive); then He will answer Himself creating a loud voice: "It is Of Allah, the One, the Subduer (Holy Qur'an 40:16); I subdued all the creatures and gave them death; verily, I am Allah, there is no God except I alone, there is no partner for me and I made the creatures by my power and I made them die by My will; and I shall resurrect them by my Power."*

Then Allah (whenever he decides) will cause the second blowing of the Trumpet; the voice will come out from the side which is toward the heavens; inhabitants there will become alive and will stand as before,

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and the same will happen to the people of the earth. People will now be gathered for reckoning (giving accounts of their good and bad deeds). May Allah help us that Day - the Day of Judgment (Qiyamah).

27.2 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following Web site: **www.playandlearn.org**

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Chapter 28: The Day of Judgment II

(The Events)

The Day of Judgment will be of 50,000 years long and the sun will be very low and the earth will be red hot like heated copper.

28.1 Hisab:

On the day of Judgment everyone's good and bad deeds will be accounted (Hisab) for, and accordingly they will be rewarded or punished. Hisab can be taken by many methods but two common ones are mentioned below and they are Mizan and Books of Deeds.

28.2 Mizan:

This word actually means the weighing scale. On the Day of Judgment, there will be a weighing scale to weigh people's good and evil deeds. Those whose scale of good deeds will be heavy, will be rewarded and those whose scales will be light they will be punished.

The following Ayats prove the existence of the weighing scales.

> ***"And the "balance" that day is true. So he whose scales of good deeds will be heavy, will prosper; and that whose scales will be light will find themselves in loss, because they mistreated Our signs." (al A'raaf, 7:8-9)"We shall set up "scales of justice" for the day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least; and if there be the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it to account; and enough are We to take account." (Holy Qur'an; 21: 47)***

28.3 Books of Deeds:

On the Day of Judgment, the written record of our whole life will be given to us. This record is written by the two angels, Raqeeb and Ateed, who are assigned to every person. These angels write down our each and every action. The place of the two angels is the collar-bone; the one on the right side (Raqeeb) writes the good deeds, and the one on the left side (Ateed) writes the evil deeds.

On the Day of Judgment, people whose good deeds will exceed the bad, will receive the Book of Deeds in the right hand; while those whose bad deeds are more than good, will receive the Book of Deeds in the left hand.

28.4 Siraat:

Siraat means Path. The Holy Qur'an has used the word 'As Siratal Mustaqim' (Straight Path) for the Divine religion. In the context of Qiyamah, Siraat means a bridge upon Hell over which all humans will have to pass. It is our belief that Siraat is the bridge over Hell; and upon it is the path of all the creatures, as Allah says:

> ***"Not one of you but all of you will pass over it; this is a firm decree of your Lord. Then, We shall save those who guarded themselves against evil, and We shall leave the wrong doers therein (humbled) to their knees." (Holy Qur'an; 19 :71-72)***

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The Holy Prophet (S) said to Imam Ali (AS) that He will give the permission for people to pass over the Siraat.

> *"O Ali! On the day of Qiyamah, I, you and Jibra'il shall sit on the Siraat , and none shall pass over the Siraat except he who would have a release from Jahannam based on your Wilayat (love and obedience)."*

It is believed that this Path is divided into stations or stops, each of them having a separate name. When a man will reach a stop named after a Wajib thing, if he had neglected that thing (in the world), he will be detained there and will asked to pay the dues to Allah; then if any other good deed came to his rescue or the Mercy of Allah saved him, he will be allowed to pass safely from there to the next stop.
In this way he will be sent from pass to another and will be detained at every pass, and asked about his short-comings in that particular order of Allah. Then if he came out safely from all passes or stops, he will reach The House of Eternity, i.e. Paradise.

But if he was detained at a pass and was not saved by any good deed or the Mercy of Allah did not come to his rescue, his foot would slip from that pass, and he will fall into the fire of Jahannam. We seek protection of Allah (S) against it.

The name of one of these stops is Wilaya. Everyone will be stopped therein, and asked about the love and obedience of Imam Ali bin Abu Talib (AS) and the Imams (AS) after him.

Likewise, one stop is named Sile-e-Raham (good behavior toward relatives), and another is named Trust, another (prayer). Likewise, there will be passes named after every Wajib or Haraam deed. The Holy Qur'an repeats the command that will be given to the angels:

> ***"And stop them, for they must be asked." (Holy Qur'an; 37:24)***

It is also said that this bridge is thinner then the thinnest hair, sharper than the sharpest sword and hotter than fire.

28.5 Intercession (Shafa'a):

Allah, in His Mercy, has opened many doors for His sinner servants to seek His acceptance and forgiveness. Two very important doors are Tawbah (Repentance) and Shafa'at (Intercession).
It is accepted by all Muslims that the Holy Prophet (S) will intercede (intervene to reconcile) on behalf of the sinners of his Ummat. A verse on this subject:

> ***"Who is there that can intercede in his presence except by His permission?" (Holy Qur'an; 2:255)***

For unbelievers there will NOT be any intercessor.

Shafa'at is meant for the benefit of those whose faith was accepted by Allah (i.e. true believers) who might have committed sins - major or minor. And those who had repented of their sins will not need any Intercession. The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

> *"He who did not believe in my intercession, Allah will not permit him to get my shafa'at."*

The benefit for Shafa'at is not for those who had doubts about religion, nor for those who ascribe a partner to Allah, nor is it for disbelievers and those who had rejected the truth; but it is for the benefit of the sinners among those who believed in Allah (and His true representatives).

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28.6 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following Web site: **www.playandlearn.org**

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Chapter 29: The Day of Judgment III

(Paradise and Hell)

29.1 Paradise:

It is the place where all sort of joy, happiness and Grace of Allah is found. It is a Garden of ever-lasting Bliss. All believers will be taken to Paradise, where they will stay forever. Sinful believers will first be punished, before they are sent to Paradise. Depending on the degree and the magnitude of sins, some sinful believers will first be sent to Hell, and then they will be brought to Paradise.

Some of the important facts about Paradise are as follows:

- The Paradise is already created. It is "NOT that it will be created at some time in the future.
- Believers' body and soul together will be brought to Paradise, and they would enjoy the reward physically.
- Various names are used for Paradise in the Holy Qur'an, some of them are:JANNATUL MAWA (Garden of Abode) JANNATUL NAEEM (Garden of Bliss) JANNATUL FIRDAUS (Garden of Paradise) DARUS SALAAM (Abode of Peace)
- Some streams of Paradise mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are: KAWTHER, SALSABEEL and TASNEEM.
- Paradise has eight gates. Some of them are: Gate of Mercy, Gate of Patience, The Great Gate, etc.
- TUBA is an important tree of Paradise. It is planted in the House of Prophet Muhammad (S) and Imam Ali (AS). TUBA has a branch in every palace mansion. Whenever the believer would desire anything, that branch would provide it for him at once.
- No Prophet (AS) would enter Paradise until the Holy Prophet (S) enters it. Shias of Ahlul Bayt (AS) would enter first amongst the various Ummats (followers of a Prophet).
- In Paradise there is neither death nor old age, neither illness nor disease, neither sorrow nor worry, neither poverty nor handicap. The believers will get what the souls desire and eyes appreciate, and they will abide there forever.
- The greatest Bliss (happiness) in Paradise will be the pleasure of Allah; that Allah is satisfied with you and given you what he had promised. You believed in Paradise without seeing it and now you will be in it.

29.2 Hell:

The Fire is the abode of disgrace and place of punishment for the unbelievers and sinners. The people of fire are poor in reality; they will not be allowed to die nor will their punishment be reduced; they will not taste in it any cold (water) or drink, except a boiling, dark, murky fluid. And if they want food, they would be fed with Zaqqum (a cursed tree); and if they seek relief they will be granted water like molten brass that will scald their faces.

It is also present in the traditions that Allah shall order some people to be led to the fire with an order:

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"Fire! Do not burn their feet, because they used to go to the mosques; and not to burn their hands, as they used to raise them for Dua's; and not to burn their tongues, because they used to recite the Qur'an; and not to burn their faces, because they used to perform Wudhu perfectly."

The Hell Fire is home for all who did not know Allah. Even some of those who knew Allah will be sent there because of their sins and wrong-doings; but it is believed that such a person will not live there forever; eventually, he will be taken out of it and sent to the ever lasting bliss. Nobody will remain forever in the fire except the unbelievers. Every verse which mentions ever-lasting punishment of fire, is about the unbelievers.

Hell has seven gates, as Allah says:

> ***"To it are seven gates; for each of these gates is a special class of sinners assigned." (Holy Qur'an; 15:44)***

According to the traditions, those gates are as follows:

1. **Jaheem:**

   Its people will be made to stand on burning stone which will make their brains boil, as cooking-pot boils its content.

   > ***"Then, for such as had transgressed the bounds, and had preferred the life of this world, the abode will be Jaheem." (Holy Qur'an; 79:37-39)***

2. **Ladha**:

   It will be the place of those who turned away from Allah, and were busy in gathering wealth without taking out the dues of Allah and His creatures. The fire will catch them by their hands, feet and forehead and suck them inside.

   > ***"By no means! For it would be the "Ladha" (fire), plucking out the sinner right to the skull inviting all such as turn their backs and turn away their faces, and collect wealth and hide it." (Holy Qur'an; 70:15-18)***

3. **Saqar**:

   > ***"Soon will I cast him in Saqar. And what will explain to you what Saqar is? It allows nothing to endure, nor does it leave anything alone; darkening and changing the colouring of man" (Holy Qur'an; 74:26-30)***

4. **Hutamah:**

   Literal meaning: "That which crushes to pieces. It will break everyone who is sent inside and grind him to powder, and then they will be made whole again and again.

   > ***"Woe to every scandalmonger and backbiter, who piles up the wealth and lays it by; he thinks that his wealth would make him last forever. By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into Hutamah." (Holy Qur'an; 104:1-5)***

5. **Hawiyah:**

   Literal meaning, a Pit.

   > ***"But he, whose balance of goods will be light, will have his home in a bottomless pit (Hawiyah)." (Holy Qur'an; 101:8,9)***

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6. **Sa'eer:**

   It means Blazing Fire. There are three hundred curtains of Fire in it, in every curtain are three hundred forts of Fire, in every fort are three hundred abodes of Fire; and in every abode are three hundred types of punishments of Fire; and scorpions of Fire, and yokes of Fire.

   "Verily, we have prepared for the unbelievers chains, and yokes and blazing fire." (Holy Qur'an; 76:4)

7. **Jahannam:**

   Well known and the most feared. In it are the Falaq, Sa'ud and Atham.Falaq is well inside Jahannam, when it is opened it makes the Fire blaze even more fiercely. And it is far greater punishment (compared to the previous six stages).Sa'ud is a brass mountain of fire in the centre of Jahannam.

   "Soon will I take him to Sa'ud (the mountain of punishment) (Holy Qur'an; 74:17)

8. **Atham:**

   This is a valley of melted brass around the above mentioned mountain. It is the place of the fiercest punishment.

   "As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins; so that they may taste the punishment; for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise." (Holy Qur'an; 4:56)

An atheist once asked Imam Jafar as Sadiq (AS) about the above Ayat: "Let us suppose that the present skin had participated in the sins, but what about the new skin? Surely, that would be innocent?"

Imam (AS) replied:

> *"It would be the same skin and yet it would be new one. Let us say that a man took a brick and crushed it to small particles, then pouring some water on it and putting it into a brick making frame, made another brick out of it. Now, isn't it not the same brick?"*

The atheist replied: "Certainly!" Imam (AS) also said the following:

> *"Verily, there is a fire inside the Fire from which even the people of Fire would seek protection. It was created only for every proud, powerful obstinate transgressor, and for every rebellious Satan, and for every person who does not believe in the day of reckoning, and for every enemy of the Progeny of Muhammad (S)."*
>
> *"The man with the lightest punishment on the Day of Judgment will be the one standing up to his ankles in the fire, wearing two sandals of fire with two straps of fire; his brain will be boiling by its heat like a cooking pot. He would be thinking that nobody would be suffering greater punishment, while in fact his would be the lightest calamity."*

29.3 A'raaf:

A'raaf means the Heights. It has been said that it is a mountain between Paradise and Hell; so it is the boundary wall between the two places. What is certain is that it is a place neither of the Paradise not of the Fire. On the Day of Resurrection the Messenger of Allah (S) and Imams (AS) will be upon it, and it is they that are meant in the words of Allah. Allah will inform them about the people of the Garden and the people of the Fire by some marks which he will put on them, and these will be the `signs' mentioned in the following ayats.

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“And on the Heights will be men who will know everyone by their marks”
(Holy Qur’an; 7:46)

"The sinners will be known by their marks." (Holy Qur’an; 55:41)

It has been mentioned in the traditions that Allah will keep upon the A'raaf some groups which would not deserve a reward without punishment but would not deserve ever lasting abode in the Hell. These are the people who will be waiting for the order of Allah. For such people there is intercession; and they will have to remain on the A'raaf till they are allowed to enter the Garden by the intercession of the Holy Prophet (S), Ali (AS) and the Imams after him.

And, there will be those who would be waiting for the decision of Allah concerning themselves, for example: those believers whose good and bad deeds would be of equal weight; those non-Shia Muslims who just followed a faith in which they were born, without knowing or understanding any thing and who had no enmity toward the progeny of Muhammad (S).

29.4 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following Web site: **www.playandlearn.org**

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Chapter 30: Philosophy of Hardship and Undesirable Events

- Hardship might occur at a personal level or at a large scale where it involves a whole community or a whole nation.
- When undesirable events occur, disbelievers try to draw conclusions that there is no justice in this world and that Allah (S) is not just or does not have mercy.
- People face hardship throughout their lives unexpectedly. They get gravely distressed by this hardship and start wondering why it happened to them.

30.1 Reasons Behind Hardship:

Let's try to find out from an Islamic point of view the wisdom and the reasons behind hardship.
It could be one of these possibilities:

30.1.1 A Reminder:

If people are left with all the bounties of the world without any hardship, they have the tendency to relax and forget about the reason of their existence. So, hardship sometimes comes as a reminder from Allah (S) telling people that this world is not supposed to be their ultimate goal, but rather, the Hereafter. Hardships come as wake up calls that may prevent a more severe punishment or a sad ending in the Hereafter.

> ***"And whosoever gives no heed to My warnings shall live in distress"***
> ***(Holy Qur'an; 20:124)***

30.1.2 An Element of Uncertainty:

With an element of uncertainty added to people's lives that hardship might occur at any time, their loyalty to Allah (S) and reliance on Him become stronger. People keep their remembrance of Allah (S) strong. They, for instance, would do a lot of Du'a to Allah to prevent hardship or to make hardship bearable.

> ***"O mankind, you are the needy of Allah"*** ***(Holy Qur'an; 35:15)***

30.1.3 A warning:

When people start drifting from the righteous path, Allah (S) might not punish them right away. Instead, Allah (S) gives people chances by sending prophets, and righteous individuals to guide them. Also, Allah (S) might send some kind of hardship to make them repent and come back to the right path.

For instance, because they did not accept Prophet Musa's message, the people of the Pharaoh got five types of temporary chastisement, as a warning of something worse that could come if they did not repent. Because they didn't heed the warnings, they received a fatal chastisement.

30.1.4 A Test:

Rest assured that Allah (S) will test each and everyone of us, many times and in many different ways, to see if we are sincere in our beliefs. Some of the tests will include hardship, loss of wealth, some fear and some tough decision making.

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"Did people think they would be left alone saying we believe without being tested" (Holy Qur'an; 29:2)

An example about Allah's tests is when He tested the sincerity of the companions of the Prophet (S) in the battles of Uhd and Hunayn. Most of them failed the test when they fled the scene after they saw danger.

One simple man said in a funny way: "Do you think that Heaven costs only 50 cents?" Apparently, Heaven costs more than that. It costs passing certain tests where the individual exercises patience, and shows obedience to Allah's rules and good control over the inner self (nafs).

30.1.5 A Punishment for the Individual's or People's own Fault:

Allah (S) already told people what is good for them and what is bad. But people, lots of times, decide not to listen and decide to follow a wrong path instead. They end up making mistakes that lead them into hardship and corruption. It is not Allah's fault because He gave people all the necessary warnings and solutions.

"Verily Allah does not deal unjustly with man, it is man that hurts his own cause" (Holy Qur'an; 10:44)

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from evil)" (Holy Qur'an; 30:41)

30.1.6 An Opportunity for Good Deeds:

Many times, Allah (S) put us through hardship to increase our good deeds. When tested with hardship, believers show good behavior, patience and strong will power. With hardship, there are a lot opportunities for rewards.

For example, Allah (S) might test society with lots of orphans, to see how society treats them.

30.1.7 Disciplining and Strengthening:

Allah sends us hardship to discipline and strengthen us to face the many challenges of life. People dislike undesirable events because they don't know what the consequences are. But, many times Allah (S) hides a good outcome behind an undesirable event.

Always, it takes hardship to awaken the individual or the nation. For example, many great scientists and inventors passed through a hardship in their lives that shaped their personalities and determination and helped show their brilliance. Also at a national level, after a big disaster, people unite and rebuild their country to make it become better than it was.

"It may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good" (Holy Qur'an; 4:19)

"Of knowledge, it is only a little that is communicated to you" (Holy Qur'an; 17:85)

30.1.8 A Source of Contentment:

When hardship falls on an exceptionally good believer, he/she would gladly accept it. Knowing it is a blessing from Allah (S). A good example is the man who was mentioned in the Qur'an as "the good believer from the people of the Pharaoh". He kept trying to convince his people to follow Prophet Musa (AS), but without any success. In the Qur'an, it was mentioned what he said:

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"I wish my people know what my Lord has blessed me with and made me of the honored ones" (Holy Qur'an; 36:26,27)

The scholars tell us that the blessing to which this man is referring is an incurable disease that he had. He gladly accepted it as a blessing and an honor from Allah (S).

30.2 How do we deal with Hardship?

- First and for most: **Do not rebel** against Allah (S). Never say it is too much to bear, it is not fair, and I won't take it any more.
- Don't give up. Keep your faith in Allah (S). Allah does not like the despondent who gives up when faced with hardship.
- Always look forward for the breakthrough. The most beloved action to Allah (S), a person can do, is awaiting the relief or the breakthrough (Faraj). The best of all deeds is waiting for the Faraj. The biggest Faraj is the emergence of Imam Mahdi (AS) from his occultation.
- Do a lot of Du'a to Allah (S), so He may lift or ease the hardship.
- Don't be a pessimist. Pessimism means you are not putting your trust in Allah (S) and indirectly you are accusing Allah of being incapable or being not generous.
- Realize that Allah (S) wanted it to be this way. ***"Say! Everything is from Allah…" 4:78***
- Don't complain too much. Otherwise, as Imam Zainul 'Abedeen (AS) puts it:

  " …you would be complaining about the Merciful to the merciless."

- Always remember that Allah (S) is fair. ***"Allah does not let a soul handle more than its capacity."***

  "… no soul shall have imposed upon it a duty but to the extent of its capacity;" (Holy Qur'an; 2:233)

- Remember what Allah (S) promised us in the Holy Qur'an (repeated two times):

  "With every hardship there is ease, with every hardship there is ease" (Holy Qur'an; 94:5-6)

30.3 Question:

Allah (S) could have created Earth without any flaws like earthquake faults, etc…
How should the believers think about these flaws? How does that change our behavior?

30.4 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following book: Lessons about: **Allah, Prophet, Justice, Leadership, Resurrection, by AyatAllah Nasir Makarim Shirazi, Translated by Laleh Bakhtiar**

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Chapter 31: Predestination and Free Will

The question of predestination and free will has preoccupied humanity throughout the ages, and continues to be discussed by Islamic philosophers and scholars. It is an issue that is directly related to the Justice of Allah (S) and the doctrine of Tawheed.

31.1 Two Schools of Thought:

Two schools of thought regarding this question have emerged. One, called the school of Compulsionists (or school of predestination), which holds that human beings have no freedom of choice whatsoever in life. Every decision a person makes and every word he/she says has been predestined since the time of creation. If someone is faithful, it is not he who decides to embrace the faith; if someone is unfaithful, it is not he who rejects the faith. All have been written. This school denies the Justice of Allah (S).

The second school of thought, the Free Will school, declares that human beings are masters of their own acts. People who belong to this school think that they have total free will to do anything they wish. This school contradicts the belief in Tawheed.

31.2 What Leads People to Believe in Predestination?

The apparent reasons are laziness and despair. Instead of confronting their problems, needs, sins, and deficiencies and trying to develop themselves into better people, they claim that their problems and sins are the results of coercive actions that they could not avoid.

Some people use it to justify following their carnal desires and commit sins. They simply say they have no free will, they were born this way, and they were destined to commit these sins.

31.3 Our Answer to Those Who Believe in Predestination:

Belief in predestination means denying the Justice of Allah (S). It means that Allah (S) forces a person to do an action then punishes him/her for it.

In addition, every person, including the compulsionists, believes that there must be a law that rules human society and people must be responsible before it. If someone breaks the law he/she must be tried and punished. The punishment, depending on the nature of the crime, could be severe and maybe the death penalty. It is interesting to note that those who belong to the school of predestination, when they are transgressed against, act according to the school of free will, they fight for their rights, they take the transgressor to court and they do not rest until the person gets punished. So, those who belong to the school of predestination, in their heart, do not really believe in it.

> ***"Whatever good reaches you is from Allah, but whatever evil befalls you is from yourself." (Holy Qur'an; 76:3)***

31.4 Our Answer to the Notion of Free Will:

Tawheed teaches us that Allah (S) rules over the whole Universe and nothing is beyond His control. So, the belief in total free will is against the fundamental belief of tawheed and the absolute supremacy of Allah (S), because one is saying that a person can do something without Allah's control over it.

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31.5 Our Belief: The Middle Way:

As Imam Sadiq (AS) stated:

> *"It is neither compulsory (pre-destiny) nor totally free will, but rather, something in between"*

This is the middle way.

In a summary, our belief in Tawheed leads us not to believe in total free will and furthermore, the acknowledgement of divine justice itself forces us to accept that our actions are not predestined. We function in this life between two states: our free will, and pre-destiny or the will of Allah (S). The beginning of guidance is always from Allah, but the individual's trouble is in his own erroneous behavior. The holy Qur'an states:

> ***"The truth is from your Lord. So whomever wills, let him believe; and whomever wills, let him disbelieve." (Holy Qur'an; 18:29)***

> ***"We showed him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)." (Holy Qur'an; 4:79)***

From these verses, it is clear that human beings have the freedom to act but must bear the moral responsibilities for their own actions.

Example:

In order to make the concept clear, let's take this story as an example: There was a patient with a paralyzed arm, with no hope of getting it back to normal again. One doctor told him, I just invented an instrument that if I attach to your arm, will enable you to move your arm, hand and fingers freely. After wearing the instrument, the patient has the choice. He can go and do good deeds with his arm and hand or he can go and do bad deeds with them. The doctor gave the patient the power to use his limb and it is not the doctor's fault what the patient does with it.

31.6 A final word:

If we can do something, it is because we have strength which was given to us by Allah (S). This strength continues moment by moment. Our free will and freedom of choice are also from Allah (S). That is, He willed that we be free and by making use of this great Divine kindness, one can make decisions and change his/her life. However, while we have free choice and free will, we are in His grasp and we will not move beyond His realm. At the same time, we have strength and power, we are dependent upon Him and without Him we will perish.

31.7 Credits & References:

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following book: **Discovering Islam by: Sayed Moustafa Al-Qazwini,**

Some material in this lesson was taken from the following book: Lessons about: **Allah, Prophet, Justice, Leadership, Resurrection, by AyatAllah Nasir Makarim Shirazi, Translated by Laleh Bakhtiar**

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